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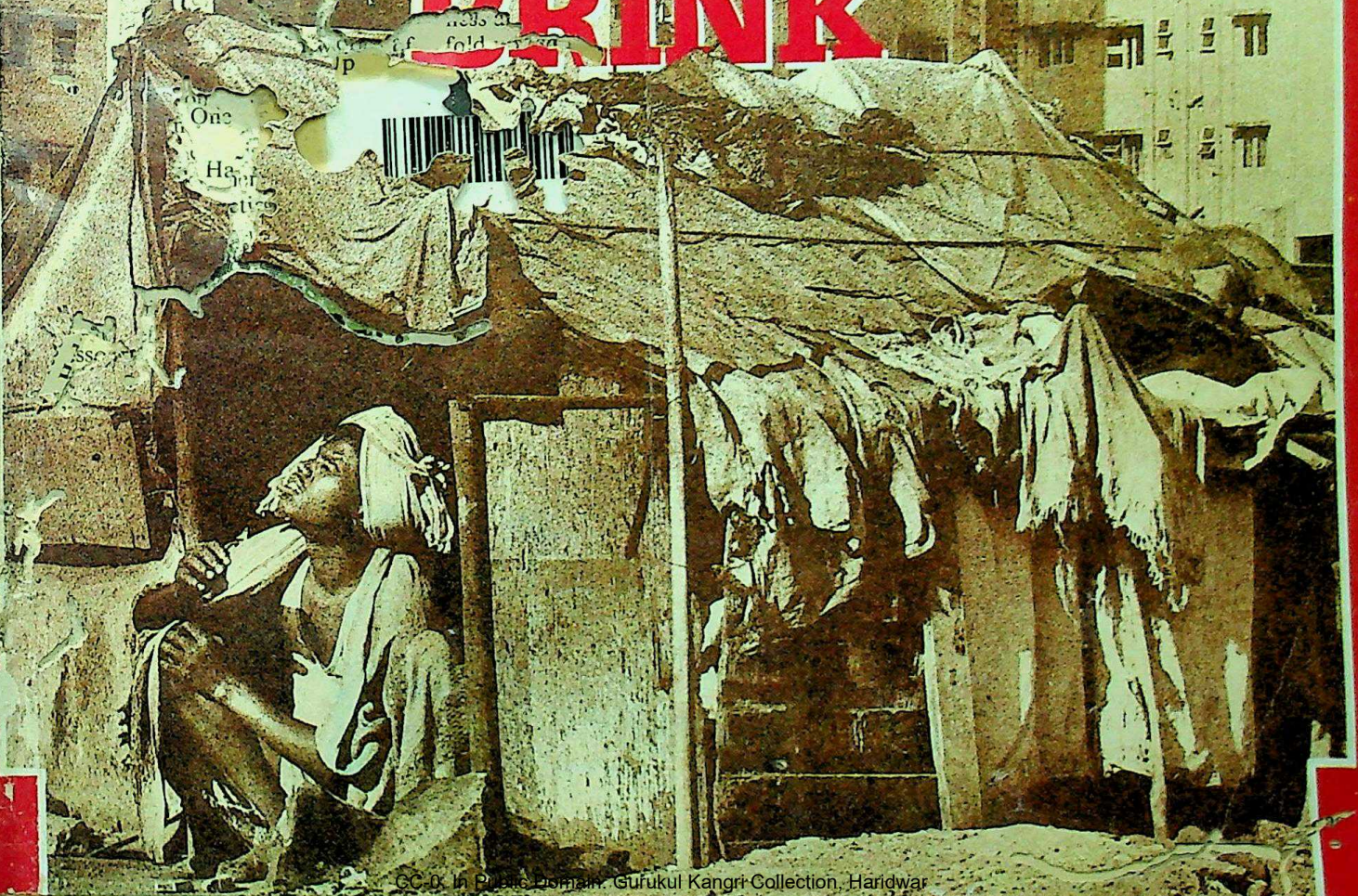
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TODAY

THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

KASHMIR JEWELS IN COLOUR
KARNATAKA: THE DEFECTION TAPES
CHANDRASEKHAR: THE NOBEL ASTROPHYSICIST

BOMBAY ON THE BRINK



Digital

When you're high on fashion

Swan sets your world aglow

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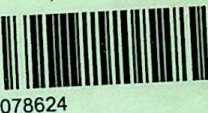
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Bombay

The once glittering and dynamic city of Bombay is fast becoming a speed-up slum that many of its residents feel will sooner or later slide into the sea. Heavily populated, Bombay is among the most congested cities in the world. This has resulted not only in a shortage of space, but has strained basic amenities like power, water and transport. A detailed report on the plight of the city.

Cover Story • Page 54



Karnataka

Since the day Ramakrishna Hegde was installed as the chief minister in Karnataka, his energies have been concentrated towards fending off threats from the Congress(I). Smarting from its state election defeat, the party has lost little opportunity to try to dislodge the Hegde Government. Last fortnight Congress(I) leaders were once again trying to wean away Janata MLA's.

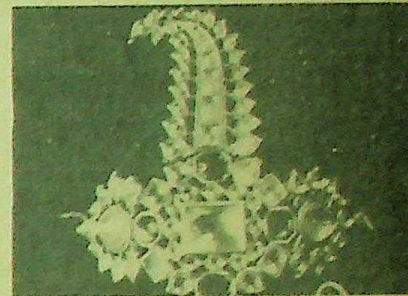
Special Report • Page 96



Mrinal Sen

Mrinal Sen, at 60, is today among those Indian film makers who have attained showpiece status abroad. From *Ek Din Pratidin* in 1979, he has turned a new chapter, winning awards and creating a cinema that throbs with passionate details. *Khandhar*, his latest film, which is perhaps his best work, was recently screened. A profile.

Cinema • Page 140



Kashmir Treasure

The unwrapping of Jammu & Kashmir's former Dogra king's century-old cache containing gold, jewellery and artifacts grabbed headlines all over the world two months back. And once in the limelight a major controversy ensued on the ownership of the treasure. An exclusive coverage of the treasure with exquisite photographs in colour.

Photo Feature • Page 63



S. Chandrasekhar

The awarding of the 1983 Nobel Prize to the 73-year-old Indian-born, US astrophysicist Dr S. Chandrasekhar was belated acknowledgement of his credentials as one of the greatest astrophysicists who facilitated man's understanding of the death of stars. For Indians, it was a matter of special significance. A report on the scientist's life and works, together with an interview.

Science • Page 102



Pierre Cardin

Pierre Cardin, the celebrated French designer, and the king of the franchising business, was in Bombay last fortnight with plans to expand his franchising business in the East. By the end of 1984, Cardin boutiques should spring up in major cities in India and a special treat include two Maxima's restaurants in Delhi and Bombay with Indian collaboration.

Globe-trotting • Page 68

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY RAGHU RAI

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SORTING THINGS OUT

It is exasperating to see the Government of India doing nothing while innocent people are being slaughtered mercilessly by the pseudo religious Khalistanis ("A Turning Point", October 31). Why can't the army enter the gurudwaras to arrest the armed terrorists? What's wrong in using guns against men who are shooting down harmless human beings to achieve their demands? Why do the reporters persist in calling leaders of the religious fanatics as saints? Satan is the word for them.

Bhubaneswar

C.S. Dotor

History will never forgive the Akali leaders who are sowing the seeds of mistrust between two communities which have lived like brothers for ages just to achieve selfish ends.

Allahabad

Kakul

Now is the time for Mrs Gandhi to find a reasonable solution to the Punjab tangle. She has missed too many opportunities in the past three years to miss this one.

Ahmedabad

Ke. J. Singh

It is now clear that the Akali Dal has lost control over the situation in Punjab and extremists and communalists have taken over. The violence in the state, if not checked immediately, may lead to a situation worse than that the Punjab witnessed during Partition when Hindu-Muslim riots gripped the province. It may not be such a bad idea for the Government of India to start negotiations with Bhindranwale to secure peace and communal harmony.

Amritsar

Shemsher B. Singh

The Hindus of India should not forget the sacrifices the Sikh gurus and their followers have made for the country. By turning against the Sikhs, we are playing into the hands of the Congress(I) which, in the first place, is responsible for it all. Sant Longowal has time and again reiterated his loyalty to

India. The psychological coupling of the Akalis' legitimate demands and the extremists' demand for Khalistan is what is responsible for the antagonism to the Akalis in most Indian minds.

New Delhi

The Akalis are not interested in getting their problems solved. They are resorting to all kinds of tricks to stay in the limelight. They are eventually grab power. The opposition parties are adopting an indifferent and irresponsible attitude. The imposition of the President's rule in Punjab is a pragmatic step.

New Delhi

Shashi Kant Gupta

The undue delay in imposing the President's rule has failed to yield the desired results. In itself, the President's rule is not a remedy. Had it been imposed earlier, it could have saved at least some innocent lives.

Bangalore

Ramanand Sharma

STUMBLING BLOCKS

The only hurdle to opposition unity is the irresponsible attitude of the Janata Party president ("Once More" With Hope, October 31). After his widely publicised padayatra, Chandra Shekhar has become boastful and arrogant. He seems to think he is the only opposition leader with some credibility. But neither he nor his party enjoys any mass base. Whatever little base he may have is because of local leaders. When he goes to Orissa without Bijay Chandra Patra or to Bihar without Karpoori Thakur?

Calcutta

Narendra Nath

The trouble with the Srinagar drama was that it had neither a hero nor a heroine. By attacking the name of Indira Gandhi, who had no role in the drama at all, the opposition leaders tied themselves into a tangle. On the other hand, it was an insipid meeting of a bunch of rusted iron.

Calcutta

R. V. K. K. K.

CLEVER MOVE

It was good to know how Ramakrishna Hegde had thwarted the opposition bid to pull his government down by manipulating defections ("Toppling Game", October 31). Hegde certainly deserves congratulations for proving, at the moment, that Karnataka is not Haryana. It would be better if he shared his experiences with other states prone to the cancer of defection and toppling. That is gnawing at the roots of democracy in Kanpur.

UNDER SUSPICION

The doubting Thomases suspect Farooq Abdullah because the Kashmir ch

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UNNECESSARY EVIL

Lottery ("Prize Bonanza", October 15) is gambling and gambling in any form, even under government supervision should not be encouraged. It is a game of chance. All transactions connected with a lottery continue to be illegal even if the Government has authorised the holding of a lottery. People should work hard to earn their livelihood; they should not go in for making easy money. It is time lotteries are banned in India.

New Delhi

Mahesh Kapasi

■ In your article "Lotteries: Prize Bonanza" (October 15), you missed out a vital piece of information. Tripura is to discontinue the state lottery. This follows the unearthing of a fraud and a case where two lottery tickets bore the same number and two officials of the lottery scheme were suspended. Let us hope that lotteries of other states continue to maintain their integrity and above-board management. It is the poor man's money that goes to swell the states' lottery coffers.

Bombay

Bonny Correa

SEEKING CLUES

The Jatinga Birds mystery (October 15) is akin to the Bermuda Triangle. This mystery needs to be solved. I am surprised that no foreign researchers are allowed to study the phenomenon. The Government must consider removing the ban.

Goldenrod Nature Club

M.S. Kulkarni

■ I feel that during August and September every year, under the given weather conditions in the Jatinga area ("Birds: The Jatinga Mystery", October 15), some wild flowers may be blooming or emitting an intoxicating fragrance, particularly during dark nights. This, when carried by strong winds, may be attracting certain birds who behave like drunks under its influence. Bessie Bengupta and Phukan should study the vegetation and flowering pattern of Jatinga. They are sure to find an explanation to the mystery of bird behaviour.

New Delhi

A.K. Das

NOTHING SHOCKS

Did you really think that you will shock our countrymen by publishing that story about deaths in railway stations ("Station of Death", October 15)? Do not forget that Indian history has been a game played out in the overpowering shadow of death. Has India not been a vast concentration camp of death, especially from the turn of this century? The horrendous famine deaths of the colonial era, the barbarous communal killings at the time of Partition, and the untold

g of thister had the treasure ("Treasure Hunt", the October 31) valued by an appraiser of what theby's, the London auctioners. I can't see the Akaz harm in getting a rare treasure valued by of the best experts in the world. It is Kavi-moured that Dr Abdullah wants to sell the asure and utilise the sale proceeds for the n getting lift of the state. I am sure the people of ing to you and Kashmir will heartily app of elight is!

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onauts, and the Russians call theirs cos-

nt Gupponauts. The India media have dubbed

quadron Leader Rakesh Sharma as the first

ing tldian cosmonaut-to-be ("Space Odyssey

e desiror An Indian", October 31). Considering

le is rat India is non-aligned and her prime

it counister is the chairperson of the Non-

ives. gned Movement (NAM), shouldn't our first

Sharnaceman be christened a NAMnaut or equi-

ut to indicate India's equidistance from

e two superpower blocs?

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is partescrption is the need of the hour, not

e base letoric. She has shelved the Punjab crisis by

When posing President's rule and left the Assam

ut Bijnle unresolved. To defuse such crises, Mr

arpooandhi needs patience and hard work. If

op-gap arrangements. It appears that her

a Nagection as chairperson of the Non-aligned

ovement has given her a new mandate to

e dram off vital domestic decisions. Is her in-

theroinest and commitment to international re-

hi, whitions at the cost of ignoring the fire in her

e oppo

into view Delhi

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on.

opala

It is time that the Indians stop

arpping on their World Cup victory and did

ome honest soul searching ("A Test of

patience", October 31). They have yet to find

suitable opening partner for Sunil

avaskar. Anshuman Gaekwad, in spite of

is dole century, has not looked very

ny,ncing and Srikkanth, with his tendency

ply across the line of the ball, does not

em to be the answer. The bowling, except

et totter Kapil Dev, is innocuous and docile.

ere are no close in-fielders who can not

ly take catches but also make catches. The

lectors do not groom young players properly.

As Dicky Rutnagar says, too much

est cricket is being played these days at the

ost of the sanctity of such matches.

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number of corpses, living and dead, lying around the length and breadth of our urban centres, devoured by the vultures of hunger, destitution and emaciation. Does anybody care? I am afraid not.

Cholt (West Germany) S.D. Devasia

AFTER THE STORM

Benazir Bhutto may or may not be the author of the book *Pakistan: The Gathering Storm* (October 31). But it is an eye-opener for our big newspapers and publishing houses who have lately developed a craze for publishing so-called "exposes". Before printing a story, a newspaper has a moral responsibility to its readers to check its authenticity. In this case, a well-known newspaper group has flouted this unwritten principle of journalism by not bothering to make a basic and simple check.

Iti, Dt Burdwan B.D. Chattopadhyay

STUDY SCHEDULE

There is need for an in depth study of the problems of reservations and academic standards in the IIT's. The study should be given wide publicity so as to bring about the necessary changes in the thinking of the powers that be. Congratulations to Professor Indiresan for speaking out. If the Government decides to accept the recommendations of the parliamentary committee on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes regarding the IIT's, I would suggest that these institutions of excellence be closed down forthwith. I hope that the academic community in the country sees the signs of danger and acts before it is too late.

acknow I.K. Kacker

If the Government cannot make the things better, why make them worse by interfering in their functioning. If the Government accepts these proposals it will definitely be taking the country's best institutions down the drain.

inpur Aparna

AIN L'ANCE

Was it a Test series between India and Pakistan (Cricket, October 15) or India and Pakistan versus the outrageous weather? Will the organisers realise their mistake and avoid arranging five-day cricket matches at a time when it's most likely to rain?

New Delhi Shashi Kant Gupta

UNHAPPY END

The failure of *Razia Sultan* at the box-office is not surprising. When a film is under production for seven long years, the heroine is old, audience tastes change, money is hoarded due to accumulation of interest and the distributors are in peril. The biggest joke of the year is the comparison of Kamal

Amrohi to Cecil B. DeMille! Amrohi is an obstinate old man who lives in a world of dreams. The failure of *Razia Sultan* should teach him a lesson.

Hassan S.P. Raman

EASY ALIENS

I could not help but detect an element of jealousy in the remarks made by the author of *Comment* (September 30) on non-resident Indians. All the puerile rhetoric aside, if given the opportunity to work and settle down comfortably anywhere in the western world or even the Gulf, your writer would waste no time in beating a hasty retreat out of India, just like a vast majority of other patriotic 'residents', and joyfully join the ranks of the so-called Non-resident Gods.

Kuwait Dharendra Verma

I am one of those non-resident Indians who decided to spend some time in India setting up an industry on behalf of and in association with some American companies. I would like to add one vital point to the several excellent ones that you have made in your comment on Non-resident Gods. The existing structure of rules and regulations, sub-committees, select committees, commissions and directorates are bewildering. While these were undoubtedly set up with good intentions and a few were probably really needed, most of them have now long outlived their usefulness and should be allowed to quietly fold up. This would require immense political courage which I am sure can be mustered. But, alas, what we witness is the creation of more and more committees for real and perceived problems! The Indian law-makers will do well to seriously consider the adoption of "sunset" laws that would automatically terminate the mandate of such bodies unless specifically authorised to continue. I can say with authority that there is a large group of Indians wanting very much to return home. Unfortunately, the fate of those who have tried has not been an inspiration to others.

Madras Vijay K. Raghavan

WHODUNIT?

In my article on the Srinagar fire (INDIA TODAY, September 15), I had suggested that two of the three men in the verandah (page 62) could be spotted in the photograph taken earlier of the men standing in the Congress(I) compound. An enlargement of the relevant portion of the photograph appeared on page 63 of the issue.

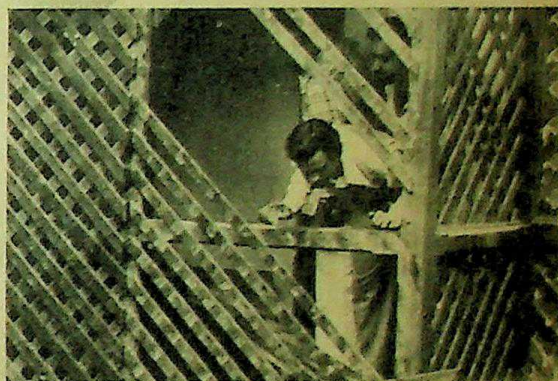
The opinion has been expressed that in fact the individuals are not the same. In one forum, the authority of "experts" has been invoked at length and with some flourish.

One "expert" is said to be a police officer with 200 awards to his credit, the other is said to be an expert on forged documents. The two are reported to have one thing in common, "namely, that they are in love with the magnifying glass".

The beard is trimmed in one photograph, they have pronounced, it is a full beehive in the other; the trousers are almost-black in one photograph, and just about off-white in the other. Facial structures, hair styles, the shapes of collars, the way the shirt falls, the folds in the trousers are all said to have been minutely examined and the verdict of the experts is said to be categorical as well as unanimous: no, the men are not the same.

There is no need to give any elaborate answer here but your readers will be amused to learn that while these redoubtable experts are certain that the men are not the same, the men themselves are certain that they are! Nor are their identities a mystery.

The heavy set man in both photographs is Mohammad Yusuf Dar son of Sona Ullah Dar of Doniwara, Chadoora, Badgam, near



Dar (bending) and Malik (then bearded)

Srinagar. A functionary of the Forest Department, he has been under suspension in connection with an embezzlement case. He is an active worker of the Congress(I). On October 8, Malik Mahi-u-Din, general secretary, J&K Pradesh Congress Committee(I), presented him to the press as one of the party workers who, he said, were being "taken into custody by the police and were tortured and offered temptations" to allegedly implicate Congressmen in the fire case.

The bearded man in both photographs is Mohammed Yasin Malik, son of Abdul Ahad Malik, resident of Karfali Mohalla, Srinagar. He has filed a statement before the city magistrate, Srinagar, denying all connection with the fire. In it he states explicitly and categorically that he indeed is the man in both the photographs.

Lest our experts set about to examine new photographs of him, I should mention that he has since shaven off his beard.

New Delhi

Arun Shourie

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INDIA
TODAY

The Talent Trap

SCIENTIFIC ideas do not necessarily progress riding piggy-back on Nobel laureates. Nor does the number of award winners serve as a rough index of a community's scientific culture. Still the news of the 1983 Nobel Prize for physics being awarded to India-born US astrophysicist S. Chandrasekhar was an occasion for all Indians to take a second look at the state of Indian scientific research. The message was writ large: India can create talents but is unable to keep them.

Both Chandrasekhar and Nobel-winning geneticist Hargobind Khorana left Indian years ago when the country had virtually no avenue for research in the higher fields. In the meantime, the country has spent since Independence over Rs 4,000 crore in research alone, building up sophisticated laboratories and advanced teaching facilities. The country has acquired the third largest pool of scientific manpower in the world and over 400 research institutions. But the exodus of talent has continued unabated. Of the 7,586 Indian scientists enrolled in the India • Abroad register of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), only 49.5 per cent have returned to India. In medicine, the percentage is even less—40.4 per cent. This is despite the fact that the majority of scientists who have migrated have not registered with the CSIR.

National Loss: Where have they gone? Obviously to the best laboratories and universities in the West, because talent is hardly expected to acknowledge the barrier of nationality. In the process, it is only India that has suffered; first, by spending a fortune on educating them, and then being perpetually handicapped in research. The mediocrity of Indian research is already a talking point in the committee of international scientists. In 1977, there were 10 countries with more than 5,000 publishing scientists. Among them India ranked eighth with 8,120 scientists. Yet their total contribution to international scientific journals was a measly 0.3 per cent. Surely India had opted for numbers in preference to quality.

In the West, ideas leapfrog because they are linked with human needs and research is unfettered by bureaucracy. US corporations invest in research because its results revolutionise modes of production, and thus invention and demand chase each other. Innovations that are found to be pathbreaking today turn stale tomorrow. In the post-war era, Japan showed the way to utilise this opportunity when its large industrial houses bought technology off the shelf and went on adapting these to its own needs.

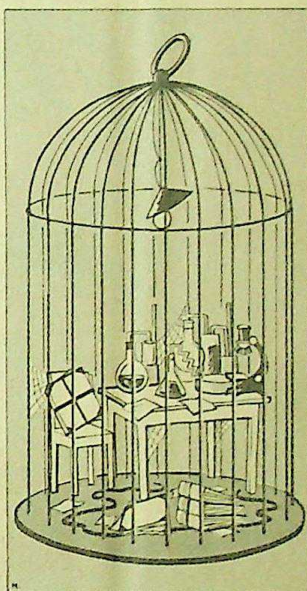
HOWEVER, India did not adopt the Japanese model, nor could it afford to go the hard way as the Soviets had done after the 1917 Revolution, beginning from scratch and challenging the combined achievements of the West on their own terms. All that India could do was to tie up scientific research in the red tape of bureaucracy. A scientist in the CSIR today is known as a "scientific officer" with a grade-system that

smacks of the pecking order among a brood of chickens. A nuclear physicist joins the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) on a salary similar to that of a section officer in the Government of India. And eminent scientists working in the research institutions are often besieged with administrative files.

However, it does not entirely devolve on the Government of the day to create the suitable climate for scientific people to work and innovate. The private sector in India is equally culpable for the neglect. Last year, only 29 companies

spent more than Rs 1 crore on research and development, and that too after the Government held out lucrative tax benefits. Of these, as many as 18 were in the public sector. As against this, US industries spent \$33.9 billion on R&D in 1981 while the US Government spent \$32.7 billion.

Change Imperative: The lessons are clear. There is no sense in setting impossible tasks. Indian talent abroad should be encouraged, and even enticed to return, but no great expectations should be raised that droves of scientists, managers and technicians will head for the country of their birth. Nor is it possible for a poor country like India to think of matching the outlays that are necessary to fuel effective and efficient research. But it is necessary to give recognition to two facts: one that the proliferation of universities and students over the years has been accompanied by an appalling decline in standards and, two, that it is not India's intention, nor is it within its capacity, to produce Nobel



laureates. But it can boost research and development (R & D) if it does the following:

- Institutions which can be protected from the declining standards must be encouraged with resources to undertake R & D. There is an urgent need to end the atmosphere of petty politicking that prevails in most R & D institutions.

- There is no need to keep reinventing the wheel. India must be more open about buying technology abroad, and considering that the total royalty burden is currently a paltry Rs 100 crore a year, there is obviously immense scope.

- Decision-makers must plump for domestic R & D expertise where it is available in adequate competence.

- The national interest may have demanded a concentration in defence, nuclear and space research, but India has stressed the more glamorous areas of research ignoring such critical fields as energy (biogas plants are still of flawed design), health, agriculture (with the exception of wheat research) and such critical industries as power, steel and fertiliser where India has production experience but insufficient design and R & D knowledge.

And little of this will be possible unless the symbiotic relationship between R & D and industry is recognised. Without scientists and industry working hand in glove, R & D will never be result oriented which, after all, is its ultimate aim. Without this, R & D will remain mired, and scientists constricted and confined—lured by the dazzle of western academia or its laboratories. And India will suffer.

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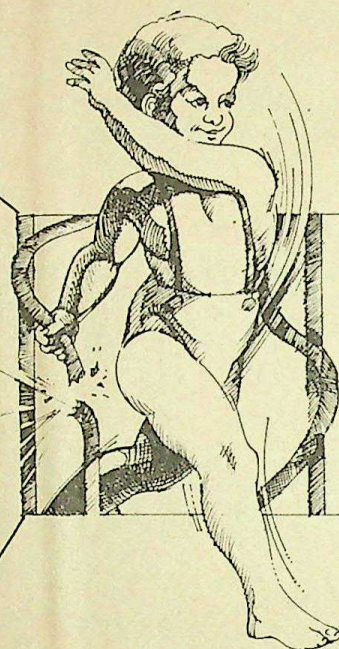
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► She (Mrs Indira Gandhi) has this absurd personal ego that stands in the way of anything. It's that ego that created Punjab, created Assam. These are not political decisions, but they are ego decisions.

—Maneka Gandhi in an interview to the Los Angeles Times

► If (N.T.) Rama Rao thinks that the Centre is a 'conceptual myth', then about myths and mythology he knows more than I do.

—Mrs Indira Gandhi at a press conference in New Delhi

► I have always disliked the hypocrisy of the Hindus.

—Jagjivan Ram in Society

► If you don't say that India is simply paradise on earth, and the extended Hindu family the most perfect way of organising society, you're anti-India. I don't have many readers there.

—Ruth Jhabvala in an interview to the New York Times

► In 1980 Mrs Gandhi was not the choice of the people but their last resort.

—Chandra Shekhar in Probe India

► Mrs Gandhi said that we cannot sit idle and be unconcerned of what is happening inside Pakistan today... She had no bloody business to say so when I do not say what is happening inside India.

—Zia-ul-Haq in an interview to American television

► In his white churidar-kurta and shawl, he (Amitabh Bachchan) thinks he is some god-damn messiah, when in actuality, he loves having an obsessed woman hovering around him. It makes him feel like God.

—Mahesh Bhatt in Stardust

► Man is essentially a vulgar being. Otherwise he wouldn't be a human being.

—Dada Kondke in Movie

► Zeenat Aman is shapely as an hourglass, but the sand seems to have settled in the bottom.

—C.N.S. Murthy in Filmfare

► I have no need for men or boys. I have never been kissed. I don't run after sex, sex doesn't run after me. In my spare time I just read film magazines and Richie Rich comics.

—Sridevi in The Times of India

► They (the audiences) don't want to shell out bucks for a cinema ticket and sit and watch a man smoke a cigarette for twenty minutes and mutter one dialogue. In the art films they are wasting so much of precious celluloid.

—Manmohan Desai in The Hindustan Times

► They (commercial film makers) are exploiting the common man's need to believe to have faith. The bastards are giving him a massive morphine injection. They have built a cocoon around him. My films prick the cocoon. So they hurt.

—Govind Nihalani in Debonair

► I can never forget him (Amitabh Bachchan). Even when I enact a scene with someone else, I do it fantasising about him.

—Rekha in Current

► One of the advantages of being a newspaperman in Bombay is that every year you can interview a new chief minister.

—Busybee in Bombay magazine





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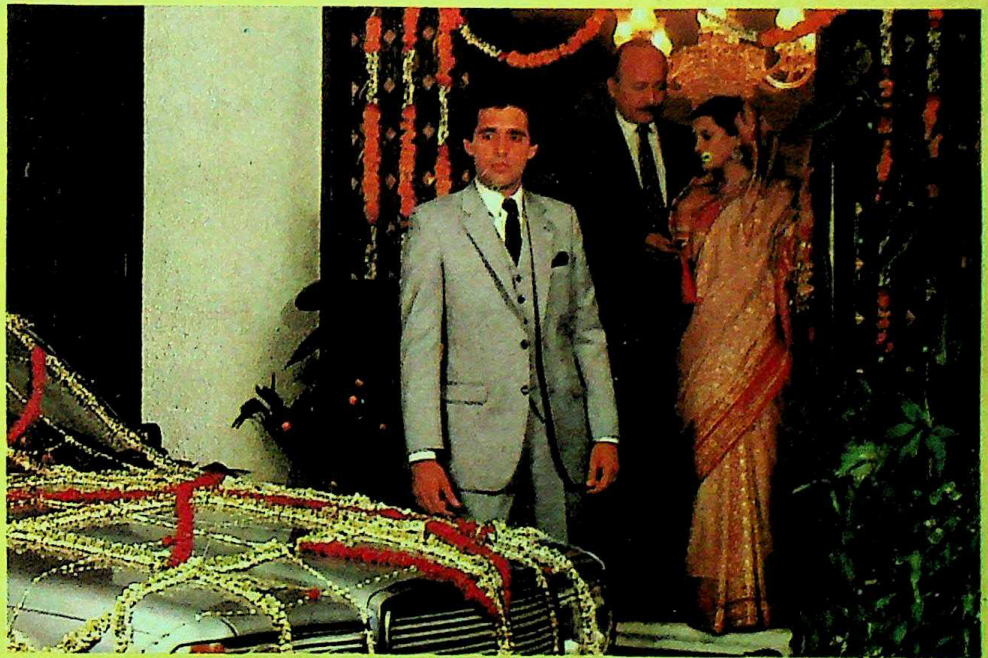
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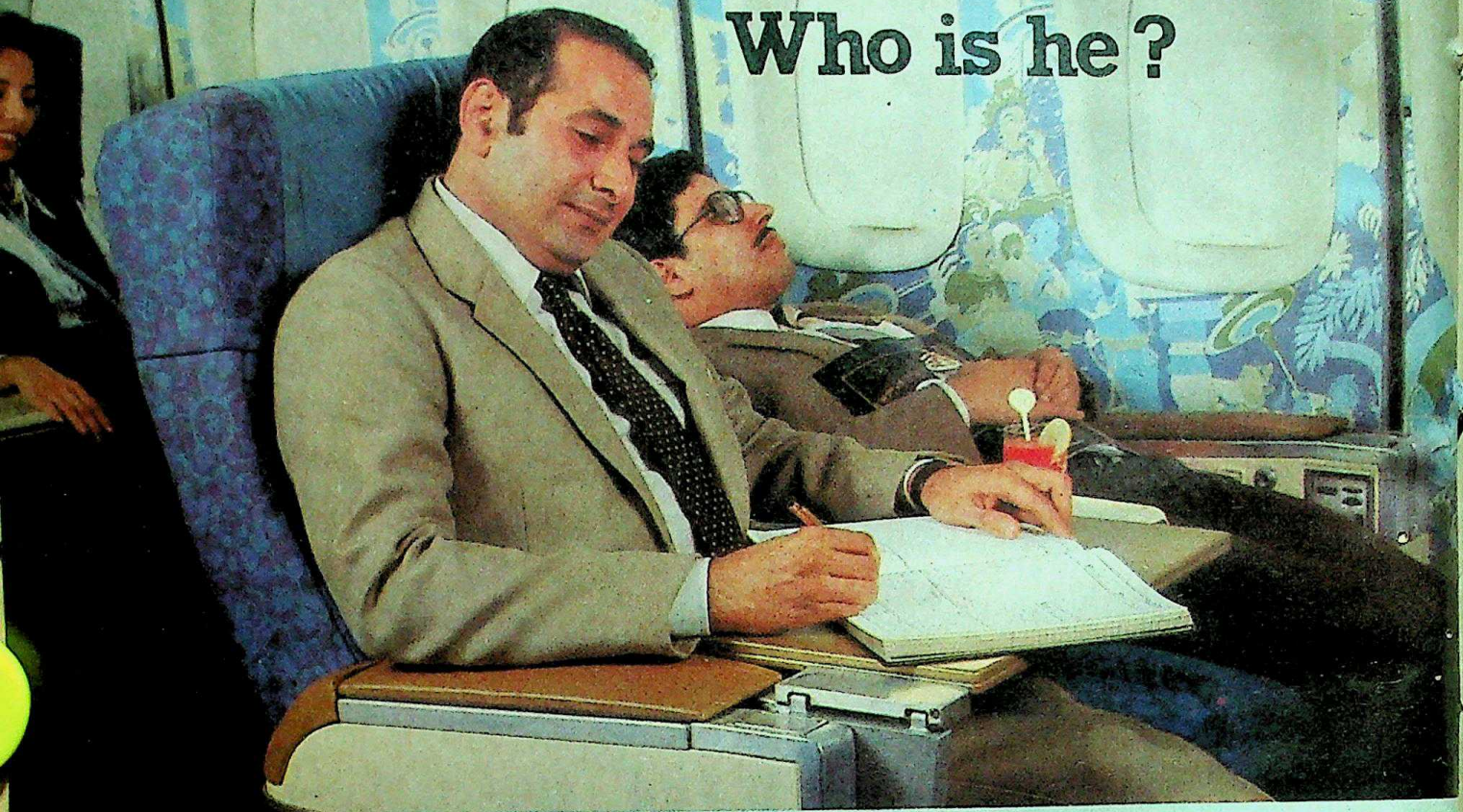
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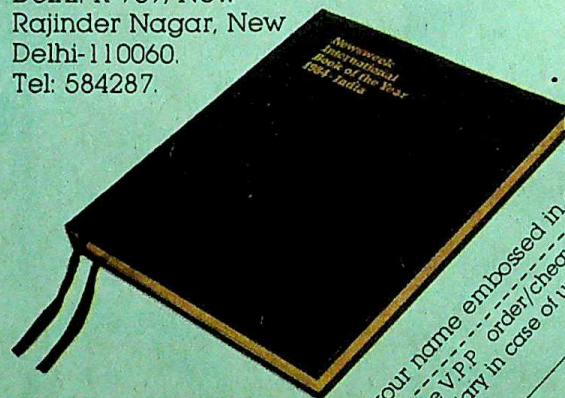
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RAT RACE

■ Big rats, small rats, brown rats, rats with whiskers, grandfather rats, grandmother rats, mother-in-law rats—so runs, with minor variations here and there, the famous poem by Robert Browning about the man with a thing about rats. For years, people have been wondering where the haunting tunes of the young man flute led the rats to; well, he probably led



them thousands and thousands of miles away to a place called Deshnok, about 30 km from Bikaner, Rajasthan. Here there is a temple called Karni Mata Ka Mandir, and it is, and has been for quite some time, the demesne of rats, right from the deep-voiced heads of families to the squeaky-gorged young.

This must be the only temple in the country where rats are worshipped. The animals wander freely about the

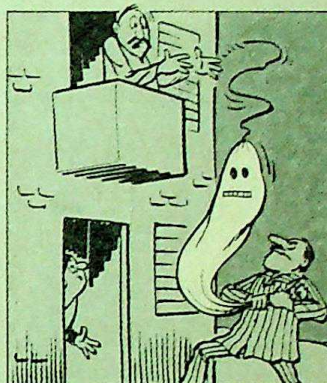
place, swarming over the 75 cm yellow marble image of the goddess Karni Devi kept in a cave. Visitors walk gingerly and it is considered a particular blessing if a rat climbs onto a shoulder. As if to prove they really are divine rats, there has never been any disease in the area. Nobody really knows how many there are, but the last census 20 years ago gave a rough count of 3,000—and it will probably stay that way until the Piper comes again.

HOUSE HAUNTING

■ Renting a house in Delhi has often been compared to one of the 12 labours of Hercules. And when a family once gets a house, it doesn't very much feel like letting go. Like the Malik of the south Delhi colony—not their real name—who rented a house over a decade ago and are still paying the rent they negotiated then,

which means that it is about a tenth of what it should be. That weeping man there in the corner is their landlord.

One night last month, as the Malik slept, one of them was woken up by a quavering 'Wooo!' He looked out of the window and something white and shapeless was floating about outside. Simultaneously, Hamlet's father's ghost growled nearby. To top it all,



the phone would ring once and then mysteriously shut off.

This occurred the next night, and a few more nights after that until the Malik had the presence of mind to rush out and grab the prancing bedsheet, and tug on the string attached until a very sheepish landlord hove to in sight on the balcony above, cut short in mid-woo.

HEEHAW!

■ Nobody pays the poor chap much attention on other days of the year, but for a few days around Dussehra, he is the cynosure of all eyes. The reference is, of course, to the donkey, that patient beast of burden who leads such a useful and unsung life. Last fortnight, for once, he kicked and snorted in the limelight at a village a few kilometres from



Jaipur. Some 8,000 donkeys thronged the annual donkey fair at village Luliabas and the air was filled with such a cacophony of heehaws as to drive even the most die-hard donkey fancier round the bend with his hands clasped firmly around his ears.

But for a few days it was likely that he would meet another donkey round that bend. They were present in all shapes and sizes—and all pri-

ces: the cheapest could be got for as low as Rs 100, the dearest usually cost somewhere in the region of Rs 3,000. An animal from Nagpur fetched the highest price of Rs 4,000. On the whole, however, only about 3,000 donkeys were sold. Apparently, raids by tax officials last-year kept buyers away this year. That, fortunately, didn't bother the donkeys too much and most of them had their bray.

DANCING FLOOR

■ There had been signs that the Great Disco Revolution, sparked off by The Ten Days That Travolta Shook and carried on by India's very own Mithun, was petering out but if ever any confirmation is needed it comes in the news that the Maharashtra Public Works Department is getting all set to carry out extensive road repairs in a large area of Thane district mostly around Vasai.

What possible connec-

tion can there be between the dislocations of various parts of the body and the department's vow? Plenty; ask any villager from Vasai as he twists, jerks, hops, and sways his way in his bullock cart or tractor over the roads. Or ask the autorickshaw drivers who only recently went off the roads—this time a purely voluntary action—to protest against what the people had christened 'disco roads'. Or ask the hordes of Bombay film stars who, not being able to find room in Mithun's disco

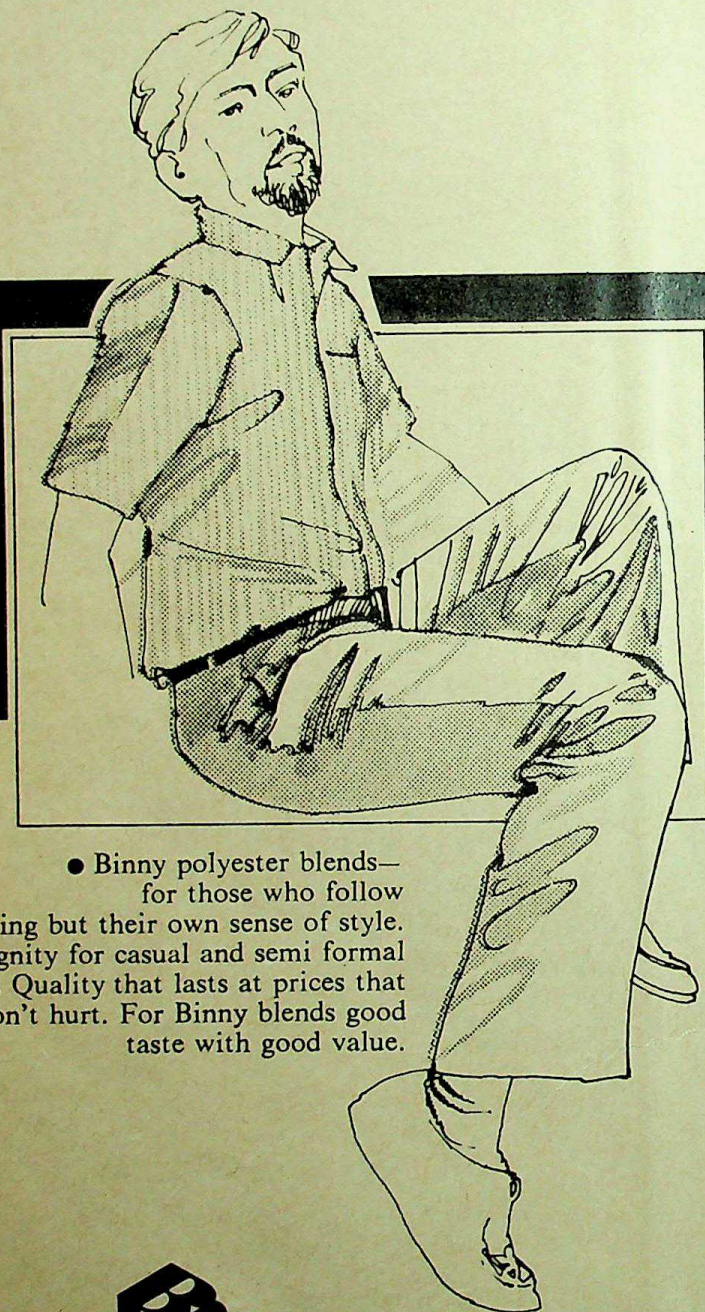


classes, settle for second best and the hard discipline of bone-jarring training sessions on the accommodating asphalt of Vasai Boulevard.

Now, however, Mithun will have to open another branch, because after the Public Works Department spends Rs 4 lakh on the pot-holes, they will no longer exist. But then again they might, because it was the very same department that forced everybody into their dancin' shoes in the first place.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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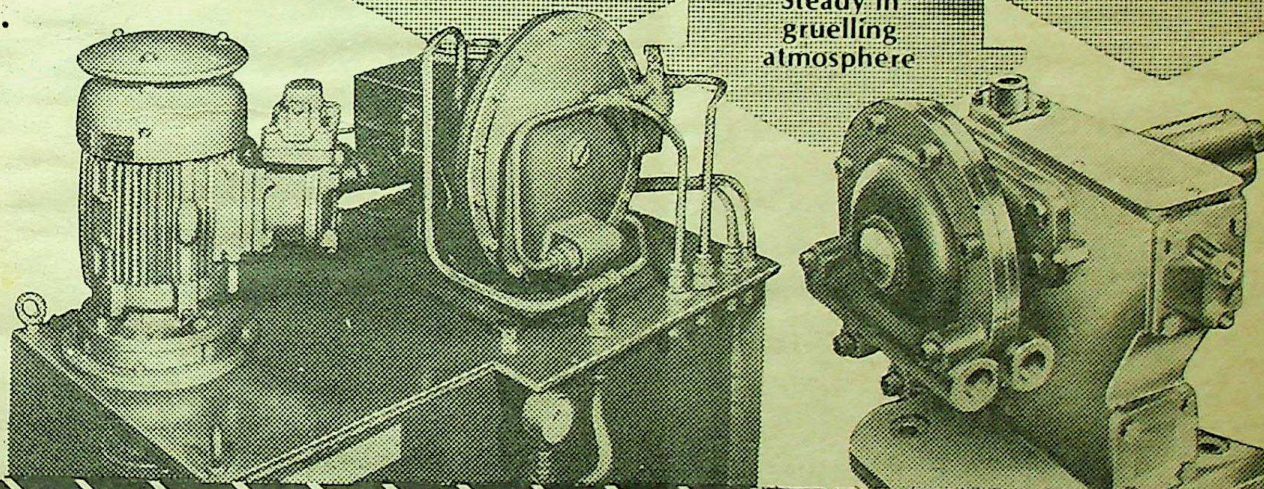
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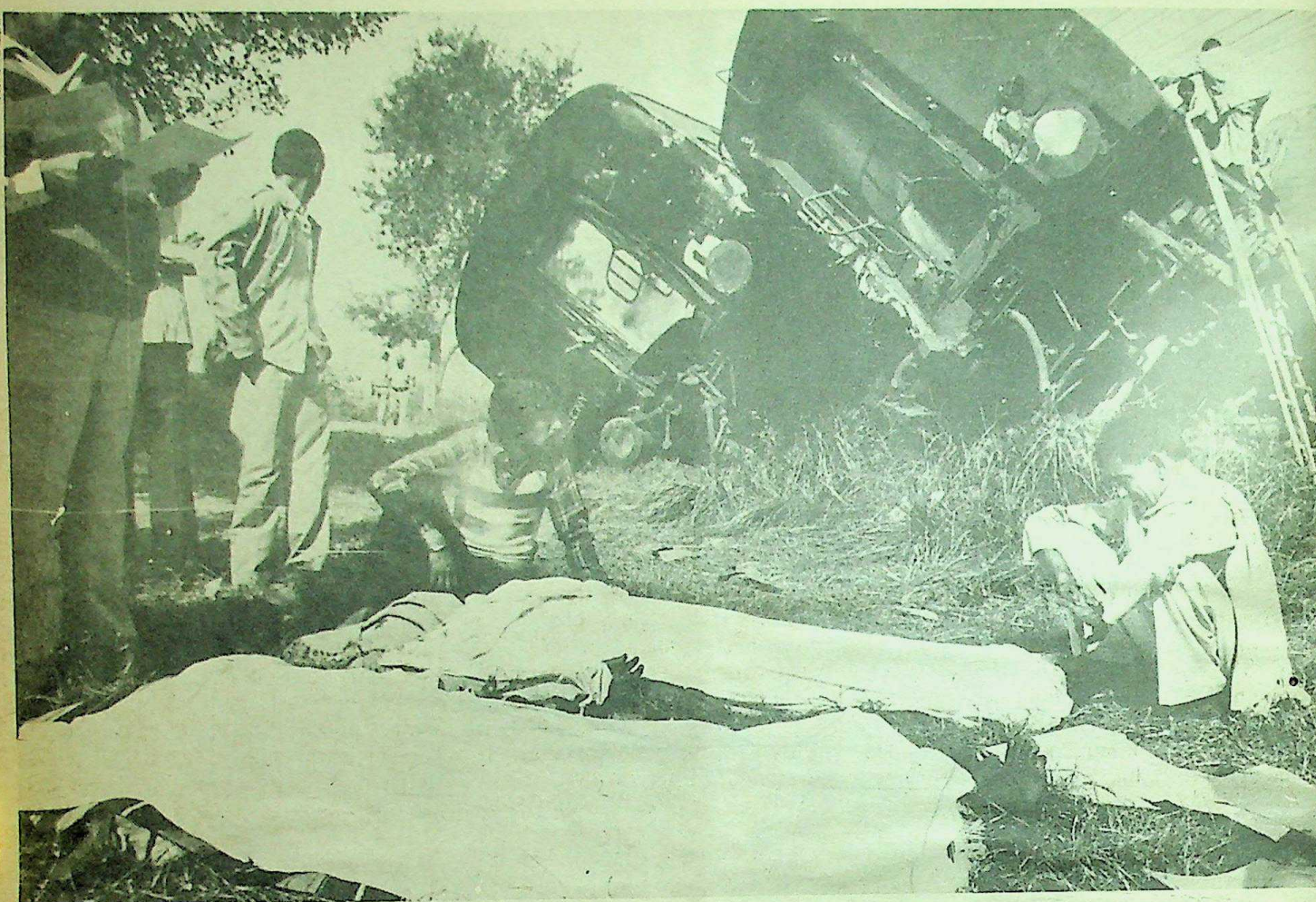
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Victims of the Mandi Gobindgarh tragedy: shocking disaster

PUNJAB

Defying Solution

FOR ONCE, the Government beat Bhindranwale to the headlines. Last fortnight, as Union Home Minister Prakash Chand Sethi held out an olive branch to the Akalis by announcing, at the meeting of the parliamentary consultative committee attached to his ministry, the Centre's intention to invite the Akalis for talks without pre-conditions it looked as if the Government was at last making an effort to check the drift. But the hopes were shortlived as, true to his form, Sethi backtracked just three days later, smarting under a sound rebuff from Mrs Gandhi and most of his Cabinet colleagues at the meeting of the Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet. And in the process the Government suffered yet another crucial blow to its credibility.

The developments that led to the infamous gaffe bordered on the absurd (see box):

But they had also served to underline the hamhanded manner in which the Home Ministry has handled crucial national issues like Punjab and Assam—and got away with it. But even as the Government sat licking its self-inflicted wounds and the Akali extremists went to town, terming this yet another attempt by the “insincere” Government to cheat the Sikhs, the moderates, who had all but announced their intention to join the talks, were left more vulnerable than ever before. “This may be the end of it,” said a young moderate declining to be identified until the Akali Dal working committee had taken a decision on the changed situation. The feeling of disgust was also shared by many Congress(I) leaders, some of whom had pressed for the talks at the consultative committee meeting.

Volte Face: Surprisingly, Sethi's new statement, asserting that the Government was in no mood to invite the Akalis for talks till “they helped create a congenial and

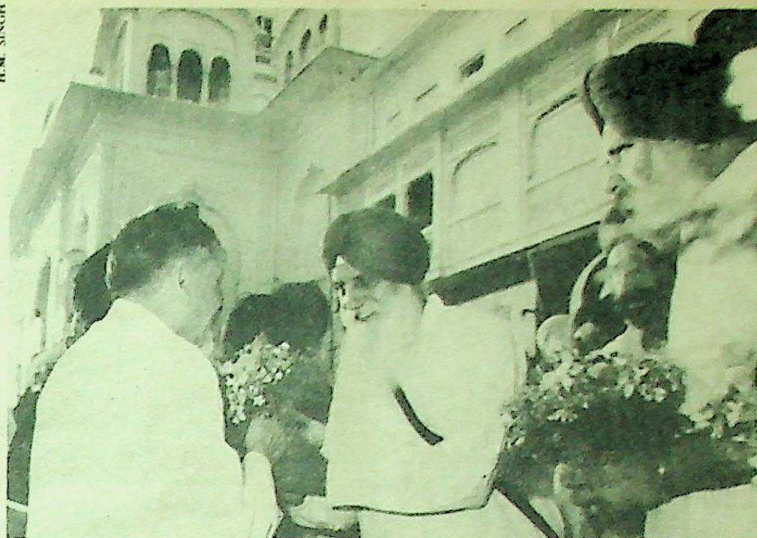
peaceful atmosphere in Punjab” came when the bureaucrats in the Union Ministry and the Cabinet Secretariat were finalising the draft of the letter of invitation which was being sent to Mrs Gandhi for approval. And it was in total contrast to what he had told the consultative committee. He had hoped the Akalis will withdraw the agitation and thus create conditions suitable for dialogue. But this is no pre-condition and the Akalis will not stand on prestige.

It is obvious that, pressed repeatedly by the MP's on the committee, including the party men, he had exceeded his brief. In an announcement which Mrs Gandhi would have liked to make herself, perhaps while she was at Chandigarh to attend the wedding of Zail Zingh's grand-daughter. Observers in Delhi still felt the possibility of talks was finished for good though it would take Mrs Gandhi and the Akali moderates to recover lost ground.

Fortunately enough, while “d

ough hints that they were pre-
ceded to come for the talks the
moderates had been guarded in
response to Sethi's offer.
Longowal: "No one has
an invitation to me. I have
seen reports in newspapers
cannot comment." This
in contrast with his argu-
ment in the past that further
talks were useless as his
party now wanted all its de-
mands accepted. But had he
acted more positively in the
instance, Sethi's volte face
could have made his group's
position untenable within the
Akali Dal. Said an Akali leader:
"Even if an invitation comes
we will perhaps accept it as
we have no intention of conce-
ding to the Government a point
of diplomacy. Let Mrs Gandhi buy time for
Commonwealth Heads of Government
Conference (CHOGM) but we will not give her
argument to malign us before the whole
world." Summing up the Akali compulsions
the *Times of India* said: "The Akali modera-
tes have to face up to the consequences of the
situation and agree to call it off. Mr Sethi's
offer gives them an opportunity to do so
without loss of face."

Now even though Sethi had belatedly
made his offer conditional there were hopes
in political circles of a fresh initiative from



Tohra and Badal receiving Pande at the Golden Temple:
jockeying for advantage

the Centre, worried as it was by the uncheck-
ed violence in the state. Nearly three weeks
after the Government inducted a new Govern-
or, his advisors and fresh contingents of the
CRPF and BSF, extremists continued to strike
at will and get away. And, as the fortnight
ended, the Government, in spite of countless
raids by paramilitary forces in the villages,
had no more to show than 500 bad characters
in jail and a small cache of country-made
weapons, which can be found in any Punjab
village. The operations have by now convin-
ced the Centre of the futility of such "confi-

dence building exercises" as
Pritam Singh Bhindar, IGP
(Law and Order) and de facto
chief of the Punjab Police terms
these.

Sound Tactics: Pande had
begun well with his visit to the
Golden Temple where, in sound
administrative tactic, he accep-
ted the traditional *siropa* from
the Shiromani Gurudwara Pra-
bandhak Committee (SGPC)
President Gurcharan Singh
Tohra but turned down the sug-
gestion of a chat with Longo-
wal. But extremists, operating
under what is now clearly emer-
ging to be some kind of unified
command operating out of Am-
ritsar were busy undoing all his
efforts.

A high explosive handgre-
nade of army make was hurled over a
Ramlila gathering in Chandigarh killing
three. In Delhi, extremists burst bombs in
two trans-Yamuna cinema halls and in a
train at the New Delhi Railway Station. Said
a senior police officer in Chandigarh: "What
Pande tried to achieve through his pilgrim-
age to the holy city was lost in Chandigarh."

For Pande, the administrator for all sea-
sons, Assignment Punjab has proved to be
more than eventful. Much as he and Pritam
Singh Bhindar, the de facto chief of the state
police have tried to rebuild the morale of the

THE GOVERNMENT

Doubletalk

EVEN by his own muddled stan-
dards, Home Minister Prakash
Chand Sethi could hardly expect
to get off lightly. For a good hour he sat
red-faced on October 25 as members of
the Union Cabinet's Political Affairs
Committee chided him for having
jumped the gun by virtually issuing an un-
conditional invitation to the Akalis for
negotiations and swallowed, the next
evening his pride by com-
plaining to the press that he
had been misunderstood.

Making a complete
about-turn on his earlier
offer for unconditional
talks, Sethi said there was no
question of the Government
inviting the Akalis till it was
convinced that the latter
were helping restore a
congenial atmosphere in
Punjab. Said Atal Behari
Vajpayee, who attended the

meeting of the parliamentary consulta-
tive committee to the Home Ministry: "I
don't know whether it is a let-down from
the prime minister or whether Sethi had
talked irresponsibly. But this has des-
troyed the Government's credibility."

Clear Statement: Vajpayee, like
most other members at the meeting—in-
cluding those of the Congress(I)—says
there is no question of misinterpretation
of what Sethi had said earlier. He had said
that the Government was going to write
to the Akalis in "a day or two" and would
not insist on pre-conditions. While most
members welcomed imposi-
tion of President's rule Vaj-
payee asked why the Assem-
bly had not been dissolved. Rafiq Zakaria of the Con-
gress(I) said it was because
the Centre wanted to form a
government there again.
Sethi chipped in: "We will
even take the Akalis' help in
forming the Government."

Surprised, a number of
opposition MP's asked Sethi
if he was serious or whether

he actually meant cooperation in "run-
ning the Government". Sethi said he
knew what he was talking about. The Op-
position interpreted this as meaning that
the Congress(I) was manipulating for a
coalition with the Akalis and Vajpayee
loudly remarked: "The cat is now out of
the bag." Later in the evening, prominent
leaders of the Opposition, still incred-
ulous, rang up Home Secretary T.N. Cha-
turvedi for confirmation of what Sethi
had said. Chaturvedi good-humouredly
said there had been a mix-up. Shortly af-
terwards Home Ministry officials were
requesting newspaper offices to keep
out the bit on the coalition.

Sethi's explanation: "I was misun-
derstood. I had only wanted to request
the Akalis to help restore peace." But the
PAC took him to task for more than just
this slip. He was plainly told he had no
business to ring up Jyoti Basu to "inform
him" of the transfer of Pande to Punjab.
His brief, apparently, was to contact Basu
and tactfully inform him of the Govern-
ment's intention, seeking his help and ap-
proval Sethi's track record in faux pas is
evidently, intact.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA



Sethi: slip of the
tongue

CURRENT EVENTS

people and the police the extremists have so far succeeded in getting the better of them. Even as he took over armed Nihangs attacked six Hindu shopkeepers at Chola Sahib, near Amritsar. As the Government recorded their first "success" on October 14 with the death of four alleged extremists in an encounter with the CRPF in Amritsar district a series of explosions rocked Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Delhi and then, in some kind of an encore of the Dhilwan bus killings that proved to be the turning point earlier in the month, armed extremists shot Sub-Inspector Amar Singh and wounded Head Constable Mahan Singh in a bus near Patti, 30 km from Amritsar. The shooting this time took place in daylight. The extremist death dance climaxed on October 21 with the derailment of the Sealdah-Jammu Tawi Express near the steel town of Mandi Gobindgarh in Punjab's Patiala district.

Professional Job: Police experts had good reasons for calling the last the best instance of professional sabotage—it was executed with frightening precision which stood out in contrast with the several clumsily executed attempts in the past, signalling the entry of well-trained experts. At Mandi Gobindgarh, the terrorists had been able to spot the only unwelded portion of the 110-km rail track between Ambala and Ludhiana and unscrewed it within minutes of the departure of a goods train at 11.30 in the night. The 13 bogies of the Jammu Tawi-Sealdah Express went down hurtling barely an hour later. The railway forensic experts later said the saboteurs who had unscrewed the bolts had kept on the last thread so as to fool a close look.

G.P. Singh, the driver of the train, which was cruising at a steady 60 kmph averted worse disaster by promptly applying all four brakes. He did more. Exhibiting tremendous nerve he stood on the track, bursting crackers and waving the red light at the Frontier Mail which was coming in on the same track a few minutes later. Said a shaken N.J. Awasthi, a senior railway official at the accident site: "To do a job like this so fast one had to be an expert."

But while the extremists kept a baffled police on its toes action was taking place on another front. Almost immediately after taking over Pande got Bhindranwale moving, organising a string of raids all over the Punjab countryside. But, in spite of the fresh reinforcements and special powers of arrest and shooting the police had very little to show. By the end of the fortnight it was clear that the officers, pressed to show results, had gone in for the easiest expedient of rounding up confirmed bad characters in their areas—which is a standard trick employed by Punjab police during the well-publicised "crime-control fortnights" every

PUNJAB

Readyng The Ranks

IN PUNJAB, at least, old soldiers are determined not to just fade away. Last fortnight, as tension continued to escalate in the strife-torn state, a new worry surfaced for the Government—the deep involvement of high-ranking ex-servicemen in the Akali agitation. More important, there were indications that disillusioned with the Akali politicians and intellectuals they had finally cast their lot with the controversial Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The development had other ramifications as well. It has, for one, split the seven lakh ex-servicemen in Punjab on communal and political lines and now threatens to affect the serving armed forces. To top it all, the self-proclaimed "Khalistan" president Jagjit Singh Chauhan proudly told newsmen in

ber 4. This was followed by the rather sensational meeting of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) on September 20 where Jagdev Singh Talwandi came up with his call for a parallel government in Punjab. Leaders of the AISSF were even clearer in their demand for secession.

While it was obvious that the generals and the bulk of the Sikh ex-servicemen in Punjab (about 5.6 lakh) were drawing increasingly close to Bhindranwale, the warrior-saint had added half-a-dozen instances of "communal discrimination" against the Sikhs in the armed forces to his ever-lengthening list of complaints. But what really worried the Government was the regularity and accuracy with which he quoted the kind of instances



Bhindranwale (left) and (third from left) Shahbeg Singh: ominous development

London, last fortnight, that his supporters in India did not need training by the Pakistanis as "most of them are ex-servicemen and know how to use arms".

The Government has woken up rather late on this particular development. The involvement of the ex-servicemen with the agitation began as early as December 23, 1982, with the participation of nearly 10,000 retired soldiers in an Amritsar rally organised by the Akalis—a development the authorities did not take seriously. Some eyebrows were raised later as some of the ex-generals went around conducting camps for the Akali Dal sacrificial squads at Anandpur Sahib. But the contours of their involvement became clearly visible about a month back when many of them attended the convention of the "clean-hearted Sikhs", organised by the pro-Bhindranwale group in defiance of the moderate Akali leadership at Amritsar on Septem-

ber 4. This was followed by the rather sensational meeting of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) on September 20 where Jagdev Singh Talwandi came up with his call for a parallel government in Punjab. Leaders of the AISSF were even clearer in their demand for secession.

Said a top army officer in Delhi: "It will be terribly premature and unfair of us to say that the army is being affected by political and communal feelings. But there certainly is a threat that we must quickly counter."

Graver fears were expressed elsewhere. Said retired major-general K.S. Bajwa, now a freelance writer on defence: "The real threat is that we are undoing all that we had achieved during the course of our service where we led troops from all parts of the country, rising above religious and other prejudices. The call to the Sikh ex-servicemen in particular is dangerous and will tell on the morale of the army." Acknowledged major-general Narinder Singh, a tank commander who retired in 1976 after having held crucial posts including that of the director of Military Operations during the 1965

Indo-Pak war: "Yes, it will perhaps affect the soldiers. But is there any way you can keep them out? The instances of discrimination like diminishing number of Sikhs in the forces have implications for their future generations." Added a serving Sikh colonel: "A Sikh is a soldier by religion and farmer by profession. Water is his very sustenance and today's literate soldier at least reads the newspapers."

But while the problems of water, territory and economy have troubled the former soldiers, what really pushed them into the Akali fold was their rough treatment during the Asian Games last November when Bhajan Lal's over-zealous police harassed and humiliated every Sikh going to Delhi, including serving army officers in uniform, in the wake of the Akali threat to disrupt the Games. Says major-general Jaswant Singh-Bhullar, a retired paratrooper and a regular at the Akali meetings: "For the first time we were all insulted as a community." Adds colonel B.S. Sekhon, the soft-spoken general secretary of the Punjab Ex-Service League: "Ten thousand ex-servicemen went to the Akali rally because they were insulted on the roads in Haryana." Even Bajwa accedes to the fact that the Asiad experience was a shock and the Akalis were quick to seize the opportunity. But at the same time it seems plausible that many of the old soldiers were also looking for an excuse to parachute into politics.

The first to get involved, in fact, were the disgruntled men who thought they had been wronged by the Government while they were in service and the leader of the pack was former major-general Shahbeg Singh a highly decorated soldier who organised and led the entire Mukti Bahini campaign in 1971 but was summarily dismissed on the eve of his retirement after a CBI team and an army court of inquiry held him guilty on charges of corruption.

Now that the involvement of ex-servicemen is firmly established, the key question is how the Akalis will utilise their services. There is no knowing Bhindranwale's mind. The generals deny the charge that they have been training the Akali Dal sacrificial squads. Says Bhullar: "I went to Anandpur Sahib to deliver some lectures and not to teach people guerrilla warfare. If that happens it will be done by the Pakistanis, like we did in Bangladesh. And it will happen if the Government allows things to drift."

Restraining Force: Major-general Narinder Singh ridicules the suggestion that the ex-servicemen's participation



Sekhon (left) and Bajwa: differing views

will fuel secession. "Sikhs do not want to leave India and they will not unless they are forced to do". He says Bhindranwale is "the only leader who can decide now". He asks: "What is wrong with the Akalis now raising a ex-servicemen's unit while the Congress(I) was the first to do so?" Bhullar, on the other hand, goes on to claim that people like him can be a re-training influence over Bhindranwale who, "though sincere, is politically immature". "He had no business to threaten slaughter of 5,000 Hindus when the police confiscated one of his buses—as if Hindus were waiting like goats to be killed. I tell him frankly when he is being immature. We are not in it for political gains," he says. Bhullar argues that if a communal divide does come about in the army it will be unfair to blame the retired soldiers alone. "Our loyalties are with India. In case there is war with Pakistan the Government can use my services any way it wants. But perhaps it will not trust me because there is no rifle which fires only one way," he wryly says and places the blame on the vote-oriented national politics which "taints our secularism".

Observers in Delhi, on the other hand, feel that the generals' services could be utilised by the Akalis to voice certain new demands which did not figure in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. At the meeting of the 'clean-hearted Sikhs' there was intense discussion among the generals on the question of a separate electorate for the Sikhs. The demand will now perhaps be made on their behalf first. Said Narinder Singh: "With the large-scale settle-



Narinder Singh (left) and Bhullar: speaking out

ment of Hindu labourers, the population complexion is changing drastically in Punjab. We will have to think of a separate electorate for the Sikhs."

Interestingly, the generals' enterprise draws criticism from none else than their own peers. Says Colonel B.S. Sekhon: "The soldiers participating in the agitation are doing it purely in their individual capacities and they are wrong. But it will not seriously affect the army. How does it matter if an odd havildar's mind is poisoned?" The league spokesmen also dispute the belief that the generals will be able to command the loyalties of a majority of the former soldiers. But Sekhon points to the fact that the league had anticipated the development and warned the Government about it in a letter written by its president major-general Mohinder Singh in December 1982. Says Sekhon: "We said ban the use of ex-servicemen by all political parties, including the Congress(I) or posterity will never forgive you."

The League spokesmen say the Government itself has left the ex-servicemen susceptible to the Akali pressures by ignoring their long-standing demands. Even the league functionaries ruefully say that the ex-servicemen now have no alternative except to get into politics in some way or the other. But most ex-servicemen firmly believe that none of the major political parties bothers about them. "What did the Akalis give us in their two-year rule? They did not even organise one meeting of the Rajya Sainik Board," says Sekhon. The result is the formation of the Rashtriya Suraksha Party in Chandigarh.

But whether the new party, led by retired major Tarlok Singh, now a lawyer, will catch the imagination of the Punjabi ex-servicemen and draw them away from the Akali pull is too futuristic a possibility to reassure a distressed government. "Most ex-servicemen have relations in the forces. In fact most former generals with the Akalis have relations who are serving generals in the army and it is surely telling on the forces' morale," said a top North Block official. But there seems no way the generals can be made to turn their backs on the Akalis now. The Government could only draw comfort from the utterances of people like major-general Bhullar. Says he: "Sikhs are basically expansionist. I don't know what they will do in a seven-district Khalistan. And what about my two sons and son-in-law who are clean shaven?" But his, today, is a lone voice amidst a troubled and increasingly militant force.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Chandigarh

CURRENT EVENTS

year. Beginning on October 19 the police claims after the raids followed a familiar pattern.

► On October 19 raids on eight smuggler-infested villages in Amritsar's border region yielded three country-made pistols, an ancient gun, six cartridges and a gold biscuit. Police officials themselves say 20 times as much would still be found in any of these villages.

► The following day raids on 16 villages in Hoshiarpur district yielded just one unlicensed .315 bore rifle. In 62 Jalandhar villages the police hardly did any better recovering 10 pistols, a grenade, some ammunition and arresting 34 persons under the Arms Act. Ridiculously, of the 172 persons arrested in Jalandhar district 96 had been booked under the preventive sections of the Criminal Procedure Code—on apprehension of breach of peace.

► In Kapurthala police collected from 20 villages a rifle, one country-made gun, four 12 bore pistols and arrested 20 antisocial elements.

► Raids simultaneously carried out in Ludhiana, Patiala, Ferozepore, Gurdaspur and Faridkot districts had even less to show. The tally of bad characters arrested by the police added up to nearly 300 and, in sheer desperation, the police parties went about impounding many illegal country liquor stills which are as much a part of the Punjabi life as the rifle.

Small Results: In an expression of rare realism even police officers themselves were sceptical about the operations. Admitted G.I.S. Bhullar, senior superintendent of Amritsar police: "Yes, most of those arrested are antisocial elements. But we have to screen them for terrorists." Accepted Bhindar: "No big or known terrorist has been arrested so far." On the other hand, while failing to achieve anything tangible on the credit side the raids further provoked the Akalis and evoked harsh reaction even among the moderates. Said Longowal: "The Central Government cannot achieve now what the tyrant Mughals could not through oppression. The brutality on the Sikhs in the villages must be stopped." Charged P.S. Badal: "The Government seems to be aiming at destroying the peasantry, the country's backbone. This is no way to flush out the extremists."

Bhindranwale, of course, reacted with characteristic aplomb. Said he: "Police officials terrorising innocent Sikhs shall face the same consequences which others of their ilk did in the past." The raids had also angered the pro-Bhindranwale All India Sikh Students Federation which asked its cadres to go underground and organise strikes in the state's colleges. But Pande dismisses the protests, saying: "The Akali tirade is without

any basis. I do not agree that innocent persons are being harassed, much less humiliated. The police have strict instructions not to touch innocent people or harass women or children." Pande feels the raids will be useful in that these would reassure people throughout the state of the efficacy of the law and order machinery.

Little Coordination: Bhindar is more specific and calls it a confidence-building exercise both for his beleaguered force and the people. "We have decided to start the night bus services again which shows that we are overcoming our demoralisation," he says. But that could be a rather optimistic claim for even a cursory look at the once busy Chandigarh bus terminus at night shows buses leaving empty for major Punjab towns. In fact, if rebuilding morale is high on the list of the Government's priorities there is something surely lacking in coordination among the various limbs of the Government. Else, the Government could have avoided the acute embarrassment of first cancelling, in panic, 40 trains in Punjab in the wake of the Mandi Gobindgarh disaster and then backtracking by "rescheduling" and slowing these instead.

In fact the lack of coordination was also visible in the way the extremists succeeded in carrying out sabotage in Delhi. Authoritative intelligence sources in Punjab firmly say that the Delhi police had been sent prior

warning that some Punjab extremists been trying to smuggle themselves into capital. The police in the capital, however, were the only ones to come up with what looked like a genuine extremist catch—purely accidental one. Harbhajan Singh who was caught along with a Webley-S&W revolver with Pakistani markings at one of the pickets along Delhi's border with Haryana was part of a group of desperadoes said to be headed for Delhi for murdering the rankari sect chief and sabotage.

The discovery of the revolver raised more questions coming as it did in the wake of the claims from the anti-Zia element in London that Pakistan had been running a training camp for Punjab extremists in Mianwali under the leadership of Lt-General A.A.K. Niazi who in 1971, led the Pakistani garrison that surrendered in the Bangladesh war. The police in Punjab also talk of increasing arms smuggling from Pakistan but have nothing to show besides the capture of nearly 300 sophisticated revolvers about three years ago.

Solution Hunting: But if the futile crackdown against the extremists was an exacting of police inefficiency it also served to underline the fact that the real solution to the Punjab crisis was political and that the problem is not one of law and order. Freshly, the Government's faltering initiative for talks was accompanied by a serious effort by the opposition parties, particularly the United Front and even the Longowal spurned Chandra Shekhari efforts seeking withdrawal of the moratorium. There were signs of a national consensus shaping—at least among political groups—on the crisis.

This was evident at the meeting of the parliamentary consultative committee of the Home Ministry where the MP's from all parties demanded fresh talks, asked the Government leadership to come out clearly against violence and chided the Centre for dithering on such non-issues as Chandigarh and the waters. But a lot still needed to be done to bring about a sense of mutual trust between the Government and the Akalis. Longowal: "It is possible that Mrs Gandhi just wants to avoid embarrassment during the CHOGM. The world leaders will certainly express displeasure at the atrocities she has been committing on the Sikhs. She will like to tell the world that all is well with India."

Yet, if avoiding embarrassment was the Centre's objective, the gaffe in the first round had taken it farther from it. And the thought must have weighed heavy on the mind of Indira Gandhi as she planned her visit for the first time to Punjab. The initiative, now, lies with her.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with GOBIND THURAN



Bhindar: cosmetic crackdown



Rajiv Gandhi addressing the session: man of the show

C(1)

The Countdown Begins

THE MID-TERM election was never referred to in the speeches, but the message to the delegates at the three-day All-India Congress Committee (I) session in Bombay last fortnight was loud and clear. Not only was a forthcoming poll prevalent in private exchanges among participants, even the slogan for the next battle at the hustings was coined by Party President Indira Gandhi in her speech and in the political resolution. It was a message to the delegates at the three-day session in Bombay last fortnight that the new watchword is 'desh bachao'. It was not surprisingly, delegate after delegate lauded Mrs Gandhi as the only one capable of "saving" the country even as they indulged—led by Mrs Gandhi herself—in a orgy of opposition bashing, blaming the separate groups that stand opposite from the Congress(I) for virtually all ills the country faces.

The theme was picked up time and time again as the session echoed to words of one delegate after another stressing that the Congress(I) was the only hope in staving off secessionist and anti-national forces. Recent riots in Punjab and Kashmir were the main target of attack with the implication that the position in its one-point programme to elect Mrs Gandhi was tacitly helping such

In her speech, the prime minister

was particularly hardhitting towards Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, citing the recent cricket match between the West Indies and India in Srinagar where anti-national elements had reared their heads openly. The prime minister wondered at this having taken place so soon after the opposition conclave in Kashmir. Taking the cue, several cheer leaders from the hall gallery, led by Delhi's J.P. Goel yelled: "Dismiss the Abdullah government" to which Mrs Gandhi snapped back: "It's not so easy to dismiss a government." In Punjab, the Opposition's ambivalence and recent talk of strengthening the states at the expense of the Centre was seen as an encouragement to the secessionist and terrorist forces at work there.

What was noticeable was that the party's usual favourite whipping boys, the RSS and BJP were mentioned only perfunctorily. The charge that the Congress(I) at present is keen not to overstress its secular credentials in order to cash in on the Hindu backlash vote, was strengthened when at first the working committee decided to incorporate the minorities into the tail end of the political resolution. After second thoughts, however, that this might be misunderstood, a separate minorities resolution was read out but with only two speakers. Sensitive to anti-minority charges Mrs Gandhi noted firmly: "The history and

outlook of my entire family belies this accusation."

Rising Star: The man of the show, however, was Rajiv Gandhi. The AICC(I) session ended any lingering doubts on who was to be Mrs Gandhi's successor. Rajiv Gandhi was clearly not just being groomed as heir presumptive but was very much heir apparent. With characteristic modesty, Rajiv shunned centre stage, but working from the behind the wings, it was he who controlled the whole show—whether it was the drafting of the main resolutions or the sampling of the masalas being used for the delegates' food. All the chief ministers duly reported to him in his second floor office at Shanmukhananda Hall. His writ was so unchallenged that when Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia was called by Rajiv, he abruptly jumped up from his seat and rushed post haste to answer the summons.

The succession theme was evident in the poster display with BRCC boss and super organiser Murli Deora, plastering the city with almost as many posters of Rajiv as of Mrs Gandhi. Information and Broadcasting Minister H.K.L. Bhagat observed: "The country has come from Motilal Nehru to Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira so why shouldn't it come to Rajiv?" Mrs Gandhi defended the family monopoly. Said she: "I don't come from a royal family but we have acquired the status by our dedicated service to the nation, by sincerity of purpose and hard work. The road is open to all."

The response to Rajiv's maiden address to an AICC(I) convention was enthusiastic.

The hall was jam-packed and slogans of "*Rajiv Gandhi age badho, ham tumhare sath hain*" (Rajiv Gandhi go ahead, we are with you) rent the air to such an extent that the prime minister had to admonish the assembled Congressmen: "There will be no speech if you shout slogans." Rajiv's well thought out Rotary Club-style speech dotted with facts and figures received a standing ovation.

Conciliatory Moves: The style of the session reflected Rajiv's conciliatory approach rather than his late brother Sanjay's abrasive and authoritarian attitude. There was a definite attempt at placating all present whether one-time dissidents, discarded old shoes or those who had left the party and rejoined. No one from the old guard was made to feel unwanted. Many were put on

Bengal, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi compared Mrs Gandhi to a mother figure, observing "like a mother she will forgive errant sons".

FORMER Maharashtra chief minister A.R. Antulay who, next to the Gandhis, created the maximum flutter by having his own special cheer squad, acknowledged again and again while seconding the minorities resolution that the party was nothing without Mrs Gandhi: "Without you madam, the party would have broken up into 20 parts by now." Antulay's rehabilitation seemed complete with his being invited to the working committee and shown special favours to strengthen Antulay's image as that of a wronged and much misunderstood man. A book stall at the hall

MPCC(I) (Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee) President, N.M. Kamble, by allowing them to travel with her in the Mrs Gandhi insisted that no such slight intended and that in fact she had offered Patil a lift but he had declined. Then glancing at her watch she remarked to the working delegates: "I must rush back to the hall to listen to Brahmananda Reddy or the speaker will read some meaning into my absence."

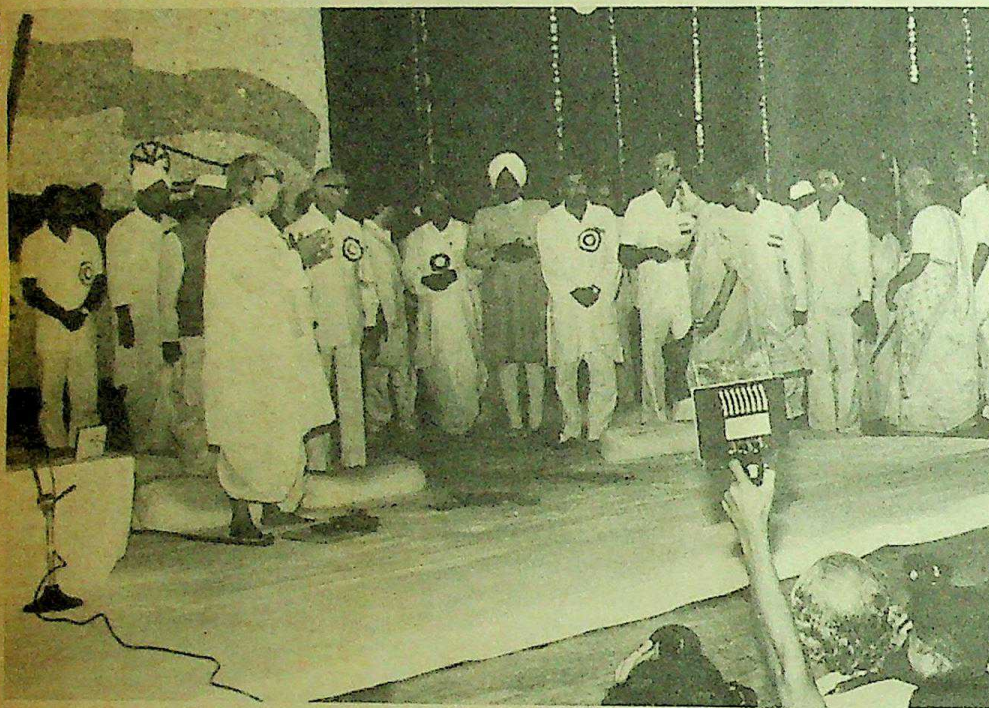
Media Response: At a massive rally in Shivaji Park at the close of the session, Mrs Gandhi put the blame squarely on the Opposition for not cooperating with the Government and for not bringing about a national consensus. In an editorial *Indian Express* queried the Congress(I) and warned against the perils of narcissism. The ruling party, said the *Express*, imagined that any criticism let alone dissent was unpatriotic and that the policies and programmes of the Congress(I) provided the basic framework for a national consensus. Party General Secretary C.M. Stephen never told newsmen: "The various resolutions passed by the AICC(I) session themselves amount to a national consensus since the Congress as a party represents the masses of India. What the Congress(I) is exactly what the people of India have decided."

The AICC(I) get-together was so bogged down in slogans, rhetoric and resolutions that no one bothered about the much needed stock-taking. Commenting on the state of the Congress(I) today, the generally ruling party weekly *Current* observed: "Can a party which has had no election in over 10 years be expected to preserve democracy?" The Congress(I) does not maintain proper records of its members and no office-bearer was able to provide membership figures. Some members of the Congress(S) were in fact mistakenly invited to the session.

Although its constitution calls for a meeting twice a year, the AICC(I) session was held after a gap of three years. Most of the members are nominated; even the working committee selection is arbitrary. The Parliamentary Board which was once the highest decision making body of the party has been reduced to a powerless group which dares not take any decision.

What was once a people's party is now woefully and unhealthily dependent on a few persons. Consequently, there is no delegation of power, no sharing of responsibility and no accountability. It was because of this attitude that partymen seemed least bothered that the session had not been called for over three years. Perhaps in an attempt to rectify matters, the Congress(I) finally decided to hold its plenary session in December next year in Calcutta.

—COOMI KAMBLE



A view of the dais: conciliatory moves

the dais and invited to the working committee or offered other lollipops—elated at being asked to second the economic resolution V.C. Shukla triumphantly told a journalist: "Patience pays." Former chief minister of Rajasthan, Jagannath Pahadia's face lit up when Mrs Gandhi told him that he could ride back on the plane with her. Former Punjab chief minister, Darbara Singh, was gratified when the prime minister announced publicly that the imposition of President's rule in Punjab was in no way a reflection on his administration.

Prodigal sons and dispossessed chief ministers ranging from Y.B. Chavan and Brahmananda Reddy to T.A. Anjiah and Jagannath Mishra were given a chance to speak. And they responded by making it clear that there was no spark of dissidence left in them. One time stormy petrel from

was selling, along with party literature, a publication titled *Private Prosecution or Public Prosecution—quid pro quo violates no law*. The book includes Justice R.B. Sule's judgement along with Antulay's interviews.

At pains to make clear that bygones were bygones and that those who had quit and returned were now completely acceptable, Mrs Gandhi observed: "Let us not go into the question of who was wrong and who was right." She invited all one-time Congressmen, whichever party they might be in now, to attend the Congress centenary celebrations in 1985.

Speaking to the women's cell of the AICC(I), Mrs Gandhi explained how her slightest gestures were misinterpreted. Referring to reports in the newspapers that morning that she had snubbed Maharashtra Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil and

POLYESTER

SUITINGS/SHIRTINGS

HARDWARE



ot a word spoken,
et so much said.
hey call it style.



For the sun-set hour

forbid



You have seen it. A darkening road arrested
under vehicles throbbing in impatience. Sharp turns,
forbidden overtaking and screeching brakes punctuate the outgoing rush.

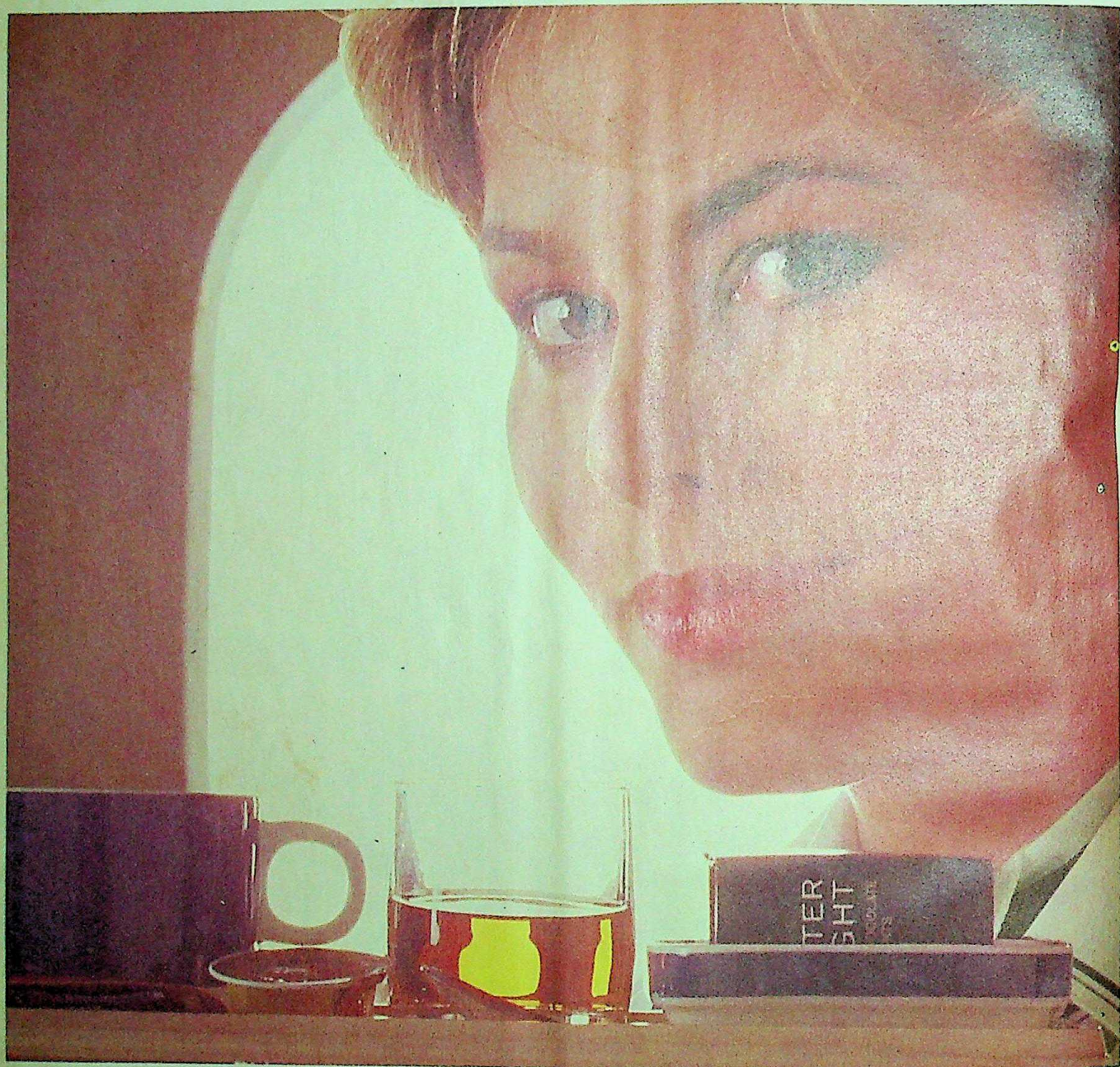
For that sun-set hour, Ceat tyres, to get home safely.

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DELHI

Scared City

AN ATTEMPT is made to kidnap a pretty 20-year-old nurse returning home after duty in a south Delhi hospital; armed car-borne desperadoes kill a passenger returning from Palam Airport and disappear with a suitcase full of money; in north Delhi four young men gag a housewife and rob her of cash and jewellery; four masked men loot a bank in east Delhi; and in Josh Chanakyapuri an ambassador is shot by a terrorist.

By last fortnight a spate of spectacular crimes had made Delhi seem like a safe mode only for law breakers. Says Kanwar Lal Gupta, chairman of the Delhi Citizens' Council: "Delhi, it seems, has been taken over by criminals. Women and children are afraid of getting out of their house after the sun sets."

The fear is palpable. People are reluctant to move around at night, and think twice about long journeys on the arterial roads even though police patrols have been intensified and checkpoints—evidently ineffective so far—proliferate. The road from the airport, where entry by non-passengers is recently banned, to town now traverses our police checkpoints and knots of policemen spend the night at other strategic locations, giving an impression of a city under siege. Cinema bombings have curtailed at-

tendance in spite of the presence of policemen, and cinema managements now lock their doors once shows start, and are talking of cancelling the interval.

Although the crime graphs have not shown any really dramatic rise, five robberies, two bomb explosions, two hold-ups, and a bank robbery in less than six weeks have understandably created panic amongst Delhi's 62 lakh people. Admits Subhash Tandon, Delhi's police commissioner and former chief of prime minister's security: "It may appear there has been some increase in robberies but on the whole the situation is better than it was five years ago. Unfortunately all the incidents took place in quick succession during a period when the police force was deployed in other religious functions like Ramlila, Moharram and VIPs' conferences." But though Tandon exudes confidence there has been a slight rise in the number of robberies and snatchings: till September 30, 1983, Delhi police had registered 167 robberies and 103 snatching incidents as against 155 and 110 in 1982. Some of the serious crimes during the last one month were:

► October 26: An unidentified gunman shot and seriously injured the Jordanian Ambassador Mohammed Ali Kourme near his Malcha Marg home;

► October 22: Armed car borne criminals ambushed a businessman in a car while others robbed a journalist's home in South Delhi;

► October 21: A family of five was robbed at gunpoint near the gate of the Indian Institute of Technology in south Delhi;

► October 19: Four young men tried to kidnap a 20-year-old nurse near the Holy Family Hospital, Okhla;

► October 14: Nineteen people were injured in a bomb blast at New Delhi Station;

► October 13: Five persons were killed when a bomb exploded in two cinema houses in east Delhi;

► October 10: Three armed criminals intruded into the first floor flat of Shanti Sikand in south Delhi and decamped with Rs 77,000 in cash, a licensed revolver and a gold bangle after injuring her;

► September 29: A four-member gang robbed a bank in the trans-Yamuna area and escaped with Rs 62,000 in cash;

► September 28: Armed bandits shot one person dead and wounded another in a daring robbery on the Palam Road.

Interestingly, a large number of crimes took place in south Delhi where the most affluent section of the population lives. Fifty of the 167 robberies took place in south Delhi though only 15 per cent of the city's population lives there. Police officers, however, say this trend is only a temporary phenomenon. Said Chander Prakash, deputy commissioner (south Delhi): "I agree that there has been some rise in rob-



A police barricade in south Delhi and (above) Tandon: alarming spurt

CURRENT EVENTS

bery and dacoity cases in south Delhi but to say that south Delhi has now become a hotbed of crime is not true."

Prakash disclosed that the number of robberies has fallen from 122 in 1979 to 50 in 1983 and claimed that the district police have succeeded in solving 27 of the robberies and three of the five dacoities committed in his district in the last nine months. Asserted Tandon: "Keeping in view the strains under which we work during the festival season, few instances of normal crime are not indicative of a worsening law and order situation."

Claims: Police officers, in fact, put forward the claim that though a few spectacular crimes do hit the headlines, Delhi has been by far the most peaceful city in the country. They back this by pointing out that the force received a word of praise from the Union Home Ministry for its 'exemplary' performance through Dussehra, Moharram and the Nirankari meeting attended by over 1 lakh people. The police are also proud of the fact that they have been able to prevent any major communal flare-ups throughout this year.

The police also have their own catalogue of complaints. They recently notified the Central Government about the reasons behind the recent crime wave. According to police sources crimes in the city can't be brought under control while 60 per cent of the 30,000-strong police force is deployed for VIP security, international conferences, and demonstrations. Delhi police officers, it seems, devote less time to crime prevention and detection because over half of the manpower and time is taken up by religious processions and political demonstrations.

During the last two months, Delhi police was extensively involved in keeping a strict watch on the activities of Sikh extremists who were expected to create trouble in the city. In fact, Delhi police scored a notable breakthrough by arresting an extremist believed to be a close associate of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

Inadequate Equipment: In addition, Delhi police claims that with their rattling vehicles and obsolete equipment, it is impossible to control crime in a city with an area of over 1,500 sq km. To multiply their difficulties, there are over 50 entry points through which criminals from neighbouring states can sneak in. According to a police survey, over 70 per cent of all crimes are committed by outsiders. Tandon has a point when he says: "The increased mobility of criminals and easy availability of firearms have made crime more remunerative. They just enter Delhi and run away with the booty."

The administration is aware of the panic

generated by the crimes and Lt-Governor Jagmohan recently summoned a series of meetings of police officials including some from neighbouring states. Jagmohan ordered the installation of seven drop gates and other barriers in various parts of the city to screen people entering and leaving the city at night. Along with other senior officials, he went around the city at night to check the arrangements and bought more than half a dozen new vehicles for the police. Said Jagmohan: "We have taken enough precautions to ensure that the ugly past is not repeated."

—PRABHU CHAWLA

KARNATAKA

Hiking Prices



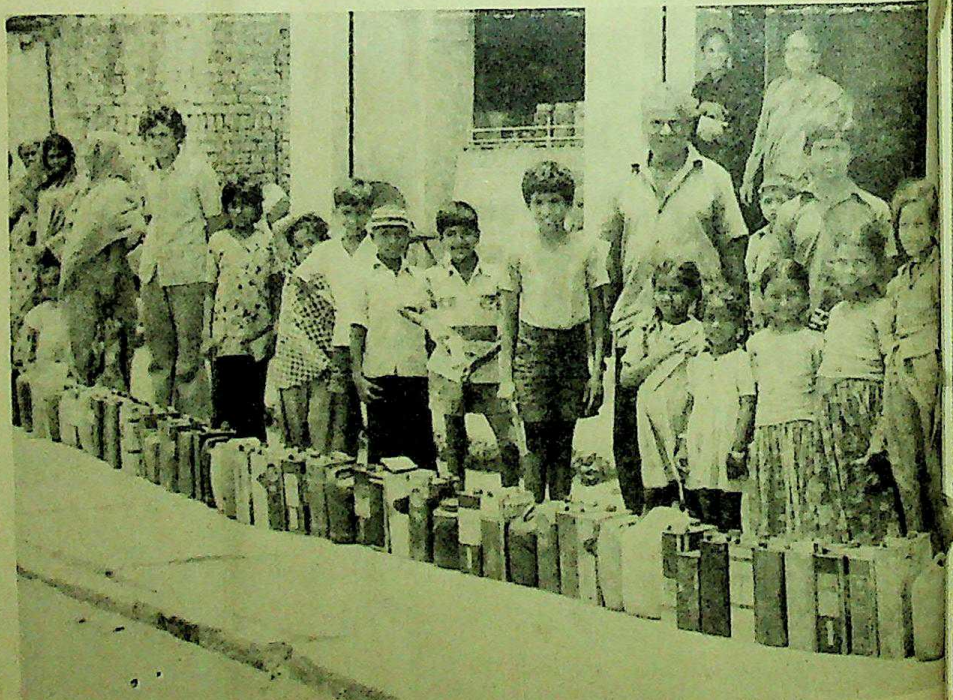
KARNATAKA Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde waved a red rag before the electoral bull last month. In one fell swoop, his government raised the price of milk from Rs. 2.80 to Rs. 3.20 a litre, that of two varieties of levy rice by 10 paise and 15 paise a kg and decreed substantial hikes in power tariffs. Although these hikes belied the Janata Party's pre-election promises to keep prices down, no widespread protests have greeted them. Said a HAL employee, Nagaraja Iyer: "Hegde is justified in raising the prices. He has to have enough money to run the Government. Let us at least give the Janata Party a chance to last their full term."

But if these hikes become a common feat the people are bound to get angry."

The milk price hike has not enthused producers either. Their share of 40 paise increase—16 paise—does little to cover their costs. They point out that Gujarat buys from the producer at Rs 2.00 a litre and sells comfortably at Rs 2.90 a litre to consumers. Against this, the Karnataka producers used to receive Rs 2.04 a litre will now get Rs 2.20 a litre. In fact, the producers themselves forestalled any outcry by threatening to stop the supply of over 3 lakh litres daily unless the Karnataka Dairy Development Corporation hiked price for their produce to at least Rs 2.00 a litre.

Foodgrains Crunch: The rice price increase is likely to have wide-ranging repercussions. The so-called 'fine' and 'super' varieties will now cost Rs 2.30 and Rs 2.45 kg, up from Rs 2.00 and Rs 2.10. On top of this, there is no guarantee that rice will be available at the stipulated price. Even the 1.90 variety is very often sold at Rs 2.30 even Rs 2.45. Complains Arpudam, a m servant: "At our ration depot we rarely get the Rs 1.90 variety. Even though the rice is filthy and worm-ridden, the depot owner does not give rice unless we pay Rs 2.30 kg. And frequently this rice is not available. To cap it all, only 117 of the state's 150 ration depots have been inspected. And problems of the administration are aggravated by wholesale smuggling of rice from the state."

The third shock came in the form of a hike in power tariffs. Users now have to pay 5 paise more than the present 20 paise



A ration queue in Bangalore: risky decision

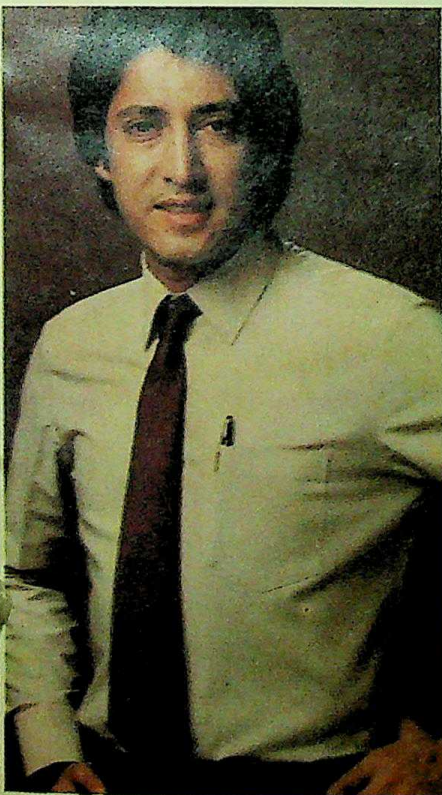
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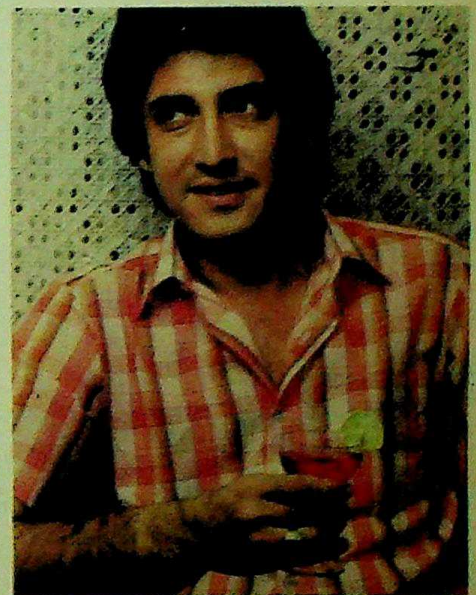
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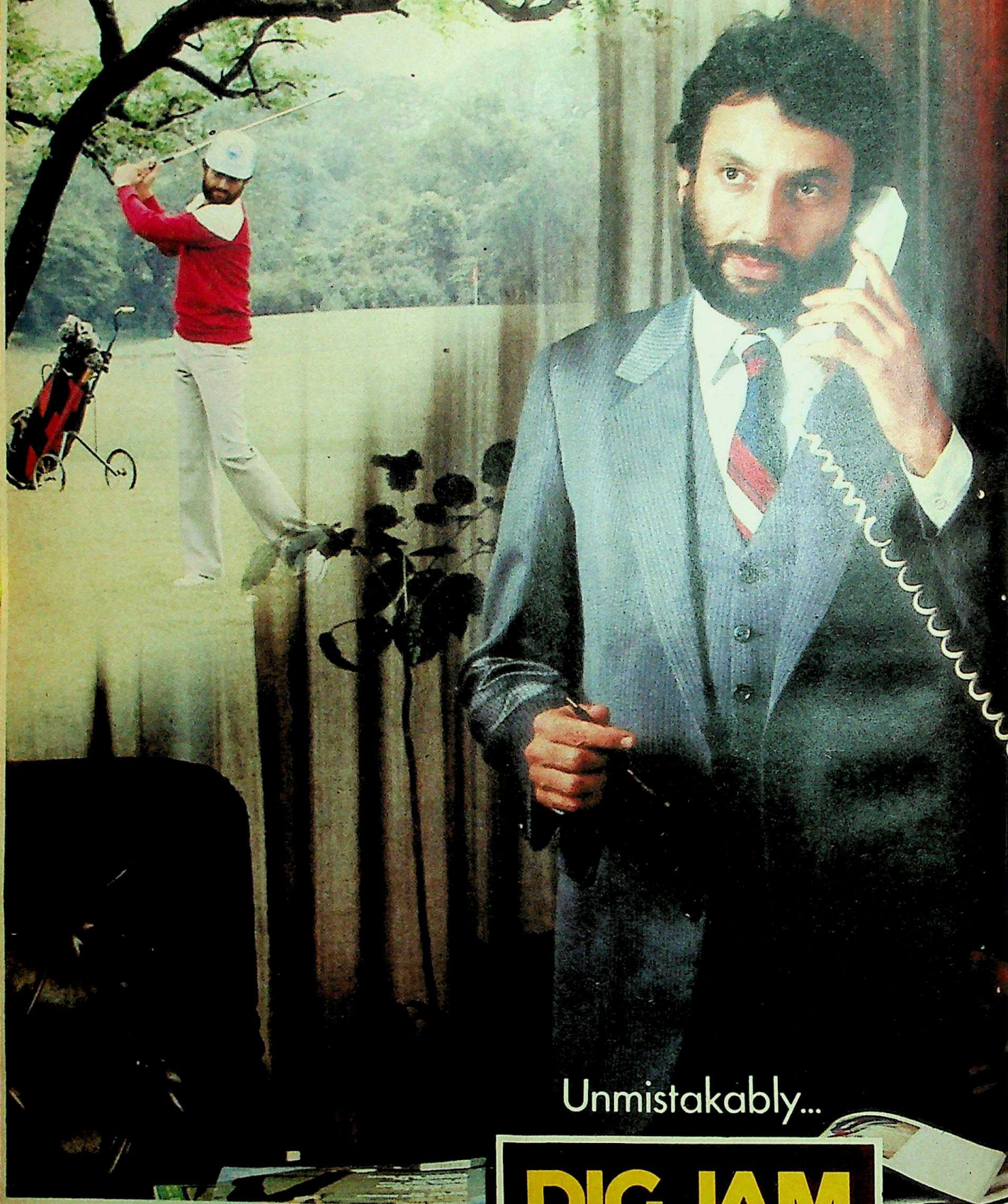
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hit up to 400 units and 10 paise more than the 30 paise for units over and above 400. High tension consumers have to pay 7.5 paise more per unit and Rs 8 per kva more than the present Rs 22 per kva as demand price. Commercial establishments such as hotels and shopping complexes have to pay a tariff of Re 1 per unit as against 30 paise so far. A snowball increase in restaurant prices appears to be on the cards. The new tariffs could fetch the exchequer an additional Rs 10 crore.

The money will go some way towards making up the state's overdraft, which is of the order of Rs 100 crore. Not surprisingly the chief minister has asked all his ministers to augment the state's kitty. Said Food Minister Basavanappa: "My department has to find Rs 8 crore to Rs 9 crore as its share of this Rs 100 crore."

Apart from the price rises, Hegde's most controversial measure is the economy order that drastically cuts or defers expenditure on items such as development schemes and educational subsidies. The austerity plan has attracted Congress(I) tirades; says opposition leader Veerappa Moily: "Austerity, yes, but justifiable if directed towards non-plan non-developmental expenditure, not core developmental programmes. Now Central allotment for core programmes like housing will also be blocked. This will put back the tempo of development by five years." That may be political rhetoric, because the mood in Karnataka is to give Hegde a chance. But, decisions such as these are bound to be unpopular and with a minority government Hegde has little room for manoeuvre. His courage is commendable but he must clearly step further with caution.

—K. BHANUMATHI

ANDHRA PRADESH

A Crucial Battle

EAGER to avenge its humiliating defeat in the election last January, the Congress-(I) is taking on the Telugu Desam in the battle for the Martur and Peddapalli seats in the 4-seat Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on November 13. The Martur seat was vacated for Dr. D. Venkateswara Rao—the 30-year-old son-in-law of Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao—by G. Hanumantha Rao, after he was offered the post of chairman of the Prakasam zilla parishad.

The Peddapalli seat became vacant when G. Prakash Rao (Rashtriya Sanjay Manch) resigned in an exemplary manner after his expulsion from the party. Manch chief Maneka Gandhi had earlier levelled charges of corruption against him.

In the earlier by-elections, on February 27 and June 19, voters reasserted their faith in Rama Rao. But this time, though the Telugu Desam is confident of winning the Martur seat, it faces a stiff challenge from both the Congress-(I) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) at Peddapalli. For the Congress-(I), a by-election victory would be a timely morale booster. Said the Congress-(I) leader in the Legislative Council, K. Rosaiah: "There is no denying Rama Rao's glamour continues to sway voters. Unitedly,



N.T. Rama Rao and son-in-law Venkateswara Rao: making the party a family concern

we will give a tough fight and win the support of the people as the non-performance of the Government is becoming clear."

Relative Problem: Many Telugu Desam activists attach immense importance to the Martur contest as Venkateswara Rao is likely to be made a minister if he wins, and many are making a bee-line for the constituency to campaign. But Rao, conscious of public and press criticism and its repercussions on the campaign, has discouraged them by emphasising that he is interested in a low key door-to-door campaign. Whether this attitude will continue as the election approaches is anybody's guess. He told INDIA TODAY at the start of his election tour: "Only two or three ministers other than the chief minister are to visit the constituency. All that really matters for voters is a convincing assurance that I will work for their interest and the development of the constituency."

To drive this assurance home, he has been on occasional visits to nurse the constituency since April, while Hanumantha Rao, who vacated the seat, is spending money through the zilla parishad for school buildings, roads and other development work for the past four months. But the Cong-

ress-(I) criticism is that Rama Rao is making the Telugu Desam party a family concern. Venkateswara Rao was the only relative actively involved with Rama Rao in planning the logistics of his tours and as a doctor in Rama Rao's retinue. And in the weeks before the historic January election, he was put in charge of organising publicity material for the campaign from Madras.

Popular Candidate: While Venkateswara Rao hails from Prakasam district, the Congress-(I) nominee, S. Chowdraiah, an equally resourceful Kamma, with interests in the tobacco leaf trade, is a native of Martur. Chowdraiah, 50, is also making his debut in the Assembly elections and has the distinct advantage of a popular image—he donates land and money generously for schools and colleges in the area. Says a Congress-(I) supporter: "We cannot expect a better choice than Chowdraiah, acceptable to all sections, whose name was suggested by the former MLA, Kandimalla Buchaiah, who lost the election by 8,500 votes." There are about 1,10,000 voters in the constituency and the Telugu Desam polled 41,846 votes in January.

For the Peddapalli seat there is to be a triangular fight with the Telugu Desam and Congress-(I) rivalled by the CPI. Seven independents are also in the fray. The Congress-(I) nominee, G. Mukunda Reddy, is the president and the Telugu Desam candidate V. Ramanaiah, the vice-president of Peddapalli panchayat samithi, both with live contacts in the 80-odd villages of the constituency. But among the voters are families of coal-miners working in the Godavari khani belt skirting the constituency. So the veteran Chennamaneni Rajeswara Rao, a former leader of the CPI Legislature Party, seems certain of nearly 15,000 votes, which in effect will tilt the balance in favour of the Congress-(I). Mukunda Reddy lost the January election to Prakash Rao by 6,300 votes and later in June the Congress-(I) lost the Peddapalli parliamentary seat to the Telugu Desam by 54,000 votes.

The state's Excise Minister, T. Jeevan Reddy, who is in charge of the Peddapalli campaign, argues: "Ramanaiah is a *pad-mashali* (the weaver community) and with about 14,000 voters from his community alone, the Telugu Desam can be sure of victory." A senior Congress-(I) leader from the district said: "If we are united, with the CPI entering the fray, the Peddapalli seat shall be ours." With confidence in such abundance the contest promises to be close.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

ANDHRA PRADESH

Coping With Calamity

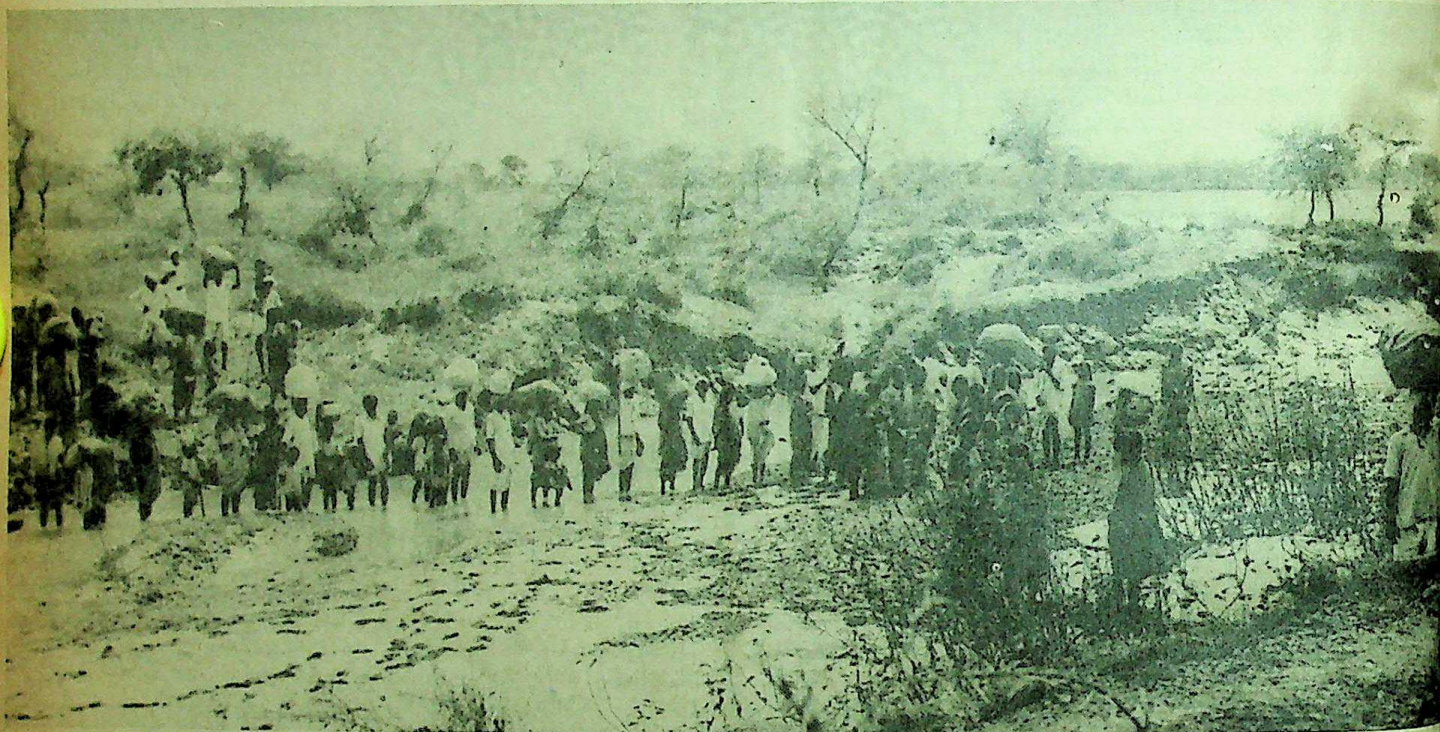
IF THE cataclysmic cyclone storm of 1977 that struck the coast of Andhra Pradesh horrified the country by the thousands of human lives it accounted for, last month's storm proved hardly less

disastrous. By the end of the deluge, 12 of the 23 districts of the state had been affected: crops in over 25 lakh acres were either damaged or totally destroyed, and the total extent of the damage was put at a stupendous Rs 520 crore by an agitated Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao. Unlike its more dramatic prede-

wittingly as a mobile thresher. Worried farmers spread the golden, green and black sheaves of paddy across the road for long stretches, as they tried to get the crop ready for milling. Ironically, inhabitants of this fertile delta have now to depend on others for their rice.

Corruption: Meanwhile, the flood and its consequences have proved advantageous to the unscrupulous. Says portly paddy grower P. Subbaraju: "Millers have begun their mischief saying the paddy is of poor quality, and the price will only be Rs 60 a bag." While the Government rose to the

crops like paddy, groundnut and some seses, which would help offset the farmers' ses, there is a greater emphasis on the crop. The farmers seem equally short-stated. Pointed out a senior administrator: "Everybody shouts hoarse asking for money from the Government, if necessary exaggerating losses. The machinery should be tuned to distribute seeds, fertilisers, pesticides to help farmers salvage themselves from distress." Instead, farmers in Vizianagaram had to protest against Agriculture Department officials turning a blind eye to blackmarketing in fertilisers.



Flood victims of Limboor village in Nizambad district being evacuated: human misery

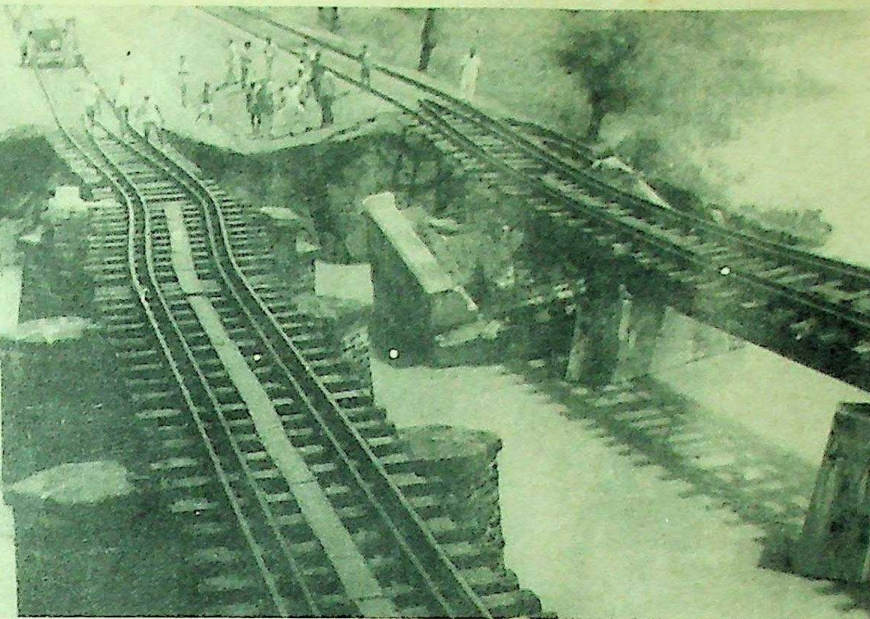
cessor, this year's fury was caused by torrential rains that came at the tail-end of the south-west monsoon, giving the state 30 per cent more than its normal share of 235 cms of rainfall. As a result, rivers and tributaries flooded their banks, and in one case, the swollen Koratlavagu flooded the village of Ataukur, carrying away the rubble of some of its 300 houses at least 30 km downstream. Said S. Prabhakar, chief engineer, Major Irrigation: "We consider this a rare occurrence or what is called a 500-year flood—the worst in living memory."

With characteristic tenacity, Andhra's farmers were back on the field, trying desperately to salvage what they could. In the hardest hit area of the Godavari delta—Tanuku—driving along the road was to double un-

occasion with effective measures to aid the affected, unprincipled officials helped themselves to the easy pickings. Although the Government had sanctioned free distribution of 10 kg of rice to every affected family, in some places, only six or seven kg were actually being given out. Said West Godavari District Collector S. Lakshminarayana: "Anybody misusing relief material is first being transferred from his place of work and punished if it is a serious offence."

Despite the relief measures, it is clear that the state's various governments have not been able to think up a long-term strategy to anticipate and prepare for the fury of floods and storms that occur with almost predictable regularity. This year, instead of encouraging the planting of contingency

Obsolete Canals: More seriously, concerted steps have been taken to modernise and strengthen the Godavari and Krishna delta canals, which remain virtually in the same condition as they were 100 years when they were designed by Sir Arthur Cotton. Although the canals are supposed to be closed every year for repair work and maintenance, powerful farmers' lobbies pressure the Government to keep the canals open year round. The last time any maintenance work was done was in 1976, when the then chief minister J. Vengala Rao refused to accede to any such pressure, after the Dowlaishetti anicut breached, threatening to flood the deltaic districts. Irrigation Minister N. Vasulu Reddy now says the canals will be closed for three months next summer.



(From top) a breached abutment near Waltair, Mrs Gandhi with (from left) Rama Rao and Governor Ram Lal and a damaged house at Pathavaram



for the repair work might be difficult to find. Said a senior engineer: "Funds for flood control measures have been halved from Rs 4.5 crore last year to Rs 2.25 crore in 1983-84."

Obviously, given the frequency of these natural disasters, the question most often asked is how much the Centre should give the states to meet the state's expenditure. The idea of a permanent national calamities relief fund has often been suggested, and the Seventh Finance Commission has recommended that the Centre give a maximum of 75 per cent of the total expenses incurred on repairs and restoration. For Andhra Pradesh, this would be in addition to a margin that has been fixed at Rs 8.5 crore. If the calamity is of "rare severity" the commission has suggested that more money be given. But after the November 1977 disaster—which was by any standards one of "rare severity"—the state asked for Rs 180 crore, but got just Rs 37 crore. N.T. Rama Rao asked for Rs 520 crore, and got only Rs 10 crore.

Political Capital: Ironically enough, this year's floods received more than their share of local and national-level politicisation. Local legislators hampered relief measures by making stately progresses through the affected areas. Commented a district collector cynically: "Many questions can be raised in retrospect and politicians do this after a disaster instead of supervising relief work to understand the problems for themselves." Both Mrs Gandhi and N.T. Rama Rao found occasion to use the floods against each other. During his visit to Vishakhapatnam, a piqued Rama Rao complained that the prime minister who was then in Paris did not even send a message of sympathy to the people of the state. Two days later, on an aerial survey of the flooded areas, Mrs Gandhi said rather drily: "The talk about reducing the powers of the Centre and the plea for more help from the Centre cannot go together. The states have been all along saying that the powers of the states have been cut. You can't have it both ways." A peeved Rama Rao retorted: "We are not asking for funds from her personal account."

The upshot of the almost childish dinging battle between Rama Rao and Mrs Gandhi is that the Centre has allocated Rs 10 crore, beside Rs 15 lakh from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Not really enough, from Rama Rao's point of view, but if the very real tragedy of the floods is to be used as merely a political weapon to put one party or another down, it is the farmer of Andhra Pradesh who will continue to suffer.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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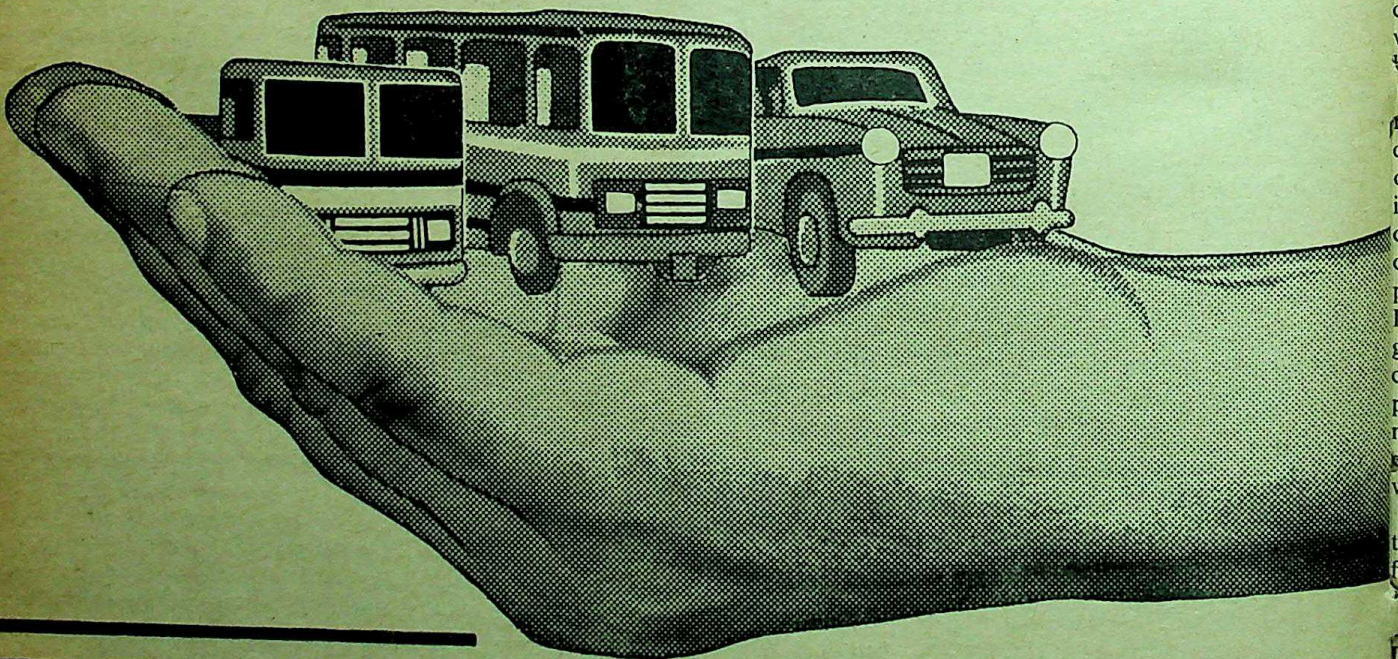
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Diplomatic Duel

IT HAS become a war of nerves between the Indian and the Pakistani governments, with neither side committing itself to a course of action which might give the advantage to the other and yet both avoiding any real confrontation on a subject which is essentially unimportant in the wide context of inter-state relations. For over 85 days Pakistan Consul General Sajjad Ali has camped with his wife and three children in a suite in Bombay's President Hotel, where he waited for a green signal from New Delhi to take possession of

Johammad Ali Jinnah's mansion at Number 2, Mount Pleasant Road. And the Indian Government, playing its cards close to its chest and giving little indication of what its ultimate intentions are, remained completely non-committal on the subject of handing it over.

Insisting that Jinnah House—built by Pakistan's Qaid-e-Azam in the days when he was a practising barrister and used as a base in the early days of the freedom struggle—had been promised to Pakistan for use as the residence of its consul general to Bombay, Ali was last fortnight stepping up his campaign to get the Indian Government to move on the matter. On the cocktail party circuit, at dinners with leaders of industry and trade, and in interviews with the press, the distinguished looking Punjabi diplomat tried to whip up support for his contention that the Indian Government had reneged on its promises and caused his family considerable distress by not handing over the palatial mansion with its terraced gardens nestled on the slope of Malabar Hill. By end-fortnight the criticism had been replaced with veiled threats.

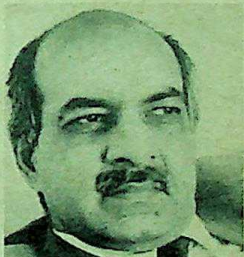
Said Ali: "The result of this would be that our consulate would be suspended indefinitely and the people of Maharashtra and adjoining states will have to continue to go through the trouble and expense of going to Delhi for visas. And since our embassy there is only able to handle a limited number of applications a lot of people who want to visit their divided families or go on pilgrimage will be held back."

The Indian Government sees the question very differently. Insisting that there is no connection between the functioning of the Pakistan consulate general and finding suitable accommodation for Ali, an official spokesman in New Delhi denied that there was any commitment to hand over Jinnah house, a large and magnificent building, to the Pakistanis. Said the spokesman: "The Government of India is considering how best to use Jinnah House." No decision is likely to be forthcoming in a hurry.

Agreement: The Jinnah House episode



The Jinnah House and (left) Ali: historic struggle



dates back to late 1977, when following on the Simla Agreement resolutions made some years earlier by Mrs Gandhi and Pakistan President Bhutto, it was decided to restart the Karachi and Bombay consulates which were shut in the wake of the 1971 conflict. Pakistan asked that the mansion, which as "evacuee property" had been taken over by the Directorate of Estates and given on a long-term lease to the British Deputy High Commission, be given to it on the expiry of the British lease at end-1981. The Janata government agreed in principle, and Ali insists that there was no change of policy three years later, when Mrs Gandhi's government informed British Deputy High Commissioner R. Colin Imrae that their lease would not be renewed as the mansion had been promised to the Pakistanis.

Meanwhile, in 1979 India restarted its consulate in the palatial Karachi premises

which had been built for an Indian embassy in the pre-1965 years and later converted into a consulate when the Pakistan capital was shifted to Islamabad. Since Pakistan owned no premises in Bombay—in the years before 1971 its consulate had operated from a rented office apartment, and the assistant high commissioner in charge of the shoe-string operation lived in a high-rise flat—they decided to postpone setting up consular offices, making them contingent to the Jinnah House being handed over.

In end-1981, only two months before they were to give up the sprawling bungalow to Pakistan to coincide with Jinnah's birthday at Christmas, Britain asked for a few months more as alternate housing for Imrae was still to be found. Referred to the Pakistanis by New Delhi, the British

Embassy in Islamabad wrote to the Pakistan Government on October 5, 1981, and were finally granted up to end-April 1982 to vacate Jinnah House. "Everything which has happened in the past makes it clear that the Indian Government had virtually given it to us and it was only a question of the British leaving," said Ali in his hotel suite last fortnight, "twice, first on September 3, 1981, and again on March 25, 1982, your external affairs minister made statements in Parliament reaffirming that the house was to be given to the Pakistan consulate and the only question left was the precise terms of the lease, or

which we had stated that we were willing to pay anything the Indian Government considered reasonable."

Impasse: Imrae moved out of Jinnah house on April 30, 1982, and little was heard of the mansion in the year which followed. Pakistan dithered on the appointment of a consul general till last May, and New Delhi kept its peace on the issue awaiting his arrival. On August 8, Ali arrived in the city complete with wife, two sons and a daughter, and steamer trunks loaded with baggage.

In the nearly three months that he has been here, Ali insists that he has received no word on whether the building will be handed over, and frequent messages to the Maharashtra Government and the External Affairs Ministry have come up blank. Last fortnight Ali, who claimed that he was at his wit's end and left with no alternative but to go back, registered yet another protest: "We feel disappointed that after innumerable assurances through diplomatic channels and after two statements in Parliament they have not found it possible to hand over the Jinnah House."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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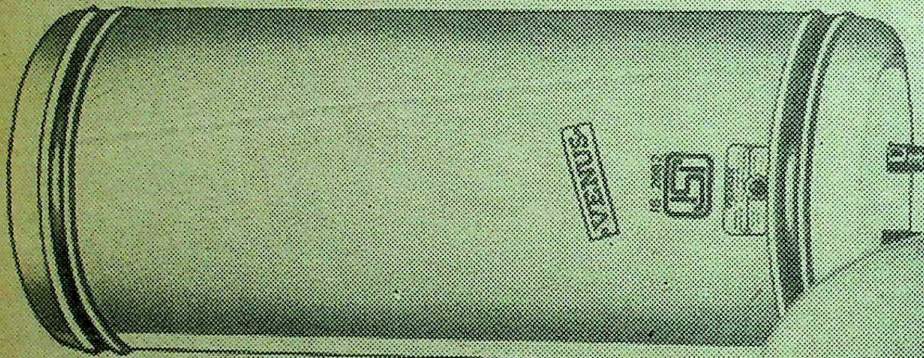
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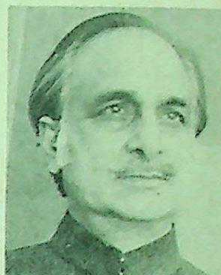
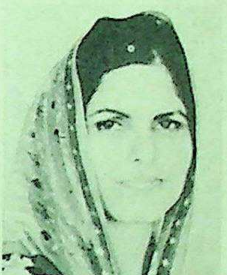
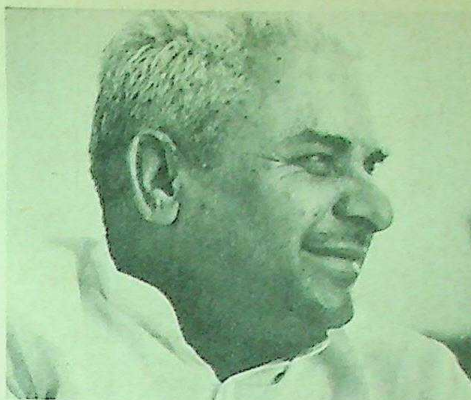


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About Turn

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minister Devi Lal's ministry by strategically
manipulating a series of defections, last fort-
night managed to achieve what seemed
almost impossible just a month ago. He won
back five out of the eight dissident former
ministers who had resigned from his cabinet
five months ago in protest against the dismis-
sal of two of their colleagues and what they
termed Bhajan Lal's "inefficient and auto-
cratic rule."

Harpal Singh, Sharda Rani, A.C.
Chowdhary, G.D. Chauhan and Amar
Singh Dhanik—all supporters of Bansi Lal,
another former chief minister and arch rival
of the present incumbent—declared in Delhi
their new love for the politically agile Bhajan
Lal. In a signed statement, of which ten
copies each were obtained by the chief minis-
ter, the dissidents urged "all true Congress-
men, and particularly the members of the
Congress(I) in Haryana to forge unity and
discipline among themselves so that the



Bhajan Lal (top), Sharda Rani (left) and
Harpal Singh: back in the fold

party and the Government may effectively
tackle the present situation created by the
activities of terrorists on the one hand and
the untimely and opportunist manoeuvres of
the opposition parties on the other."

Convenient Excuse: The terrorist activi-
ties in neighbouring Punjab which have not
so far affected Haryana, have nevertheless
proved a convenient tool for bargaining and
settling positions of power amongst the
ruling party MLA's. But even otherwise, the
chief minister had used every other means of
persuasion to win back his estranged collea-
gues. And this included counselling by
friendly go-betweens, promises of lucrative
positions, and even insidious pressure. Deve-
lopment projects in dissident constituencies
almost came to a halt—irrigation and water
supply projects in the dissident constituen-
cies of Kalka, Tohana, Tosham and Maula-
na, for instance, were slowed down. The con-
struction of schools, dharamshalas and
office buildings also suffered. The dissidents
naturally felt the resultant pressure of their
voters' protest—alleged Sharda Rani and
Harpal Singh: "We have become political
outcasts." In addition, constituency-level of-
ficials thought to be close to the dissidents
were transferred.

Moolchand Maulana and Lachhman
Singh, the two dissidents whose dismissal
started the exodus from the party and who
have not returned to the chief minister's em-
brace, have repeatedly alleged "administrative
terrorism". Says Maulana: "Bhajan Lal is
making every effort to involve me in false
cases to blackmail me to support him. CID of-
ficials have been trying to cook up cases."

DELHI

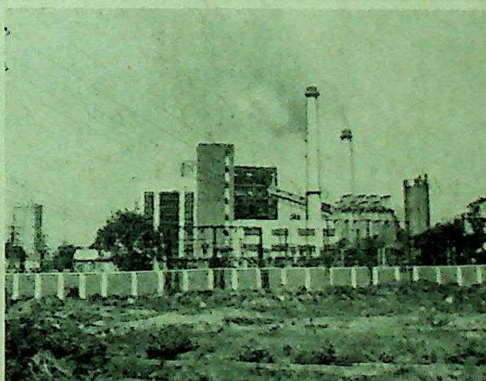
Dark Skies

THE GENERAL manager of
Delhi's Badarpur thermal power
plant on the outskirts of the city is
habituated to receiving irate letters
from his customers. But the one that
landed on his desk last fortnight was
accompanied by a sealed cellophane
packet containing what looked like
ground pepper. It was not a gift from
a well-wisher but a sample of the coal
dust that spews out of Badarpur's to-
wering chimneys and descends like a
plague of locusts on hundreds of
homes unfortunate enough to be in the
vicinity.

The packet was dispatched along
with a strongly-worded letter by Colo-
nel Brij Lal Verma, 58, a retired
Indian army officer who eventually
got fed up of sweeping out maunds of
black soot from his Greater Kailash
house every morning. "I feel like sending
a sample to the authorities every day," he
stormed, "there is no dearth of the stuff."

The dust, a mixture of unburnt coal
particles and sulphur, is the result of the

lack of electrostatic precipitators which
the thermal units are meant to be fitted
with. The precipitators suck in the un-
burnt coal particles before they can reach
the chimney. Objections against the dust
were raised as far back as 1981 and the
Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking



DESU's Indraprastha plant: dirty air

(DESU) gave an assurance that the matter
would be rectified by the end of 1982.

Irate Citizens: Nothing, however,
appears to have been done and Verma
and other concerned citizens like H.D.
Shourie, director of Common Cause, a so-

ciety dedicated to fighting issues of public
interest, have reached the end of their pa-
tience. Says Shourie, who raised the origi-
nal objections: "I held my hand two years
ago because DESU officials said they were
working on the problem and it was only
fair to give them time. I am now willing to
take the matter to the high court and
the Supreme Court if need be."

Their anger is well justified. The
coal dust can cause pneumoconiosis,
an acute respiratory disease, as well as
cause harmful effects to the eyes. Says
an ophthalmologist from the All India
Institute of Medical Sciences: "The
coal dust which is mixed with sulphur
is causing chronic conjunctivitis which
has become a common problem in co-
lonies affected by dust from Badarpur
and Indraprastha power stations."

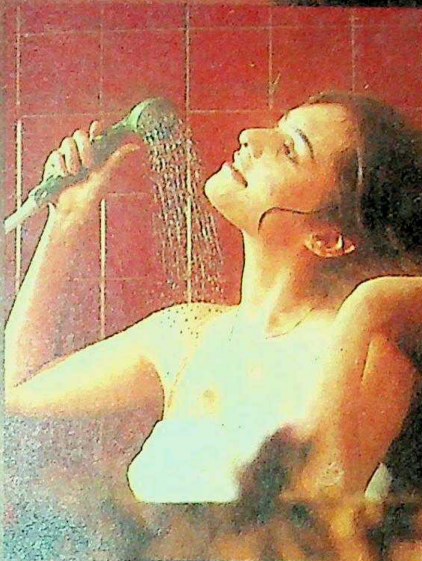
Dr T.N. Khoshoo, secretary in
the Department of Environment,
admits that the problem is a serious
one. "We want measures to be adop-
ted by the thermal plants but the initiative
rests with the authorities themselves." The initiative, however, has been taken by
victims of DESU's indifference who are
determined to press their right to breathe
clean air.

—KUNAL VERMA

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Borderline Cases



Bihar 'infiltrators' on their way to prove their nationality: sensitive issue



AGITATION against illegal immigration from Bangladesh is no longer confined to Assam. Last fortnight the four-year-old movement in Bihar hit the headlines as the state Government issued

notices to over 6,000 families in Kishanganj sub-division to "prove their Indian nationality", or else get ready to be deported. Determined to get prompt action, the administration deputed three senior magistrates to screen the families.

The administrative action constituted a major victory for the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the youth wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which is engaged in an intensive campaign, particularly in Purnea and Katihar districts, for the identification and expulsion of aliens. According to them, foreigners have 'swamped' the area in an organised way in order to establish a political base in this north-eastern corner of the state, parts of which are barely 10 km from the international border on the other side of West Bengal.

Precautionary Measures: Said one official: "Such notices may be served on more families in the second phase as the people fear that some Bangladeshis have crossed

into the area through West Bengal and settled there." The state's Additional Chief Secretary, J.C. Kundra, says: "Right now the problem of illegal immigration is not acute in the area but the Government has to take precautions."

According to Kundra and district officials, the action was taken at the instance of the Election Commission. K.N. Mishra, Purnea's district magistrate, said that "it was being done under election laws and on the direction of the Election Commission". According to another official, the Commission had ordered the scrutiny "to avoid Assam being repeated here".



ABVP leader Modi: sustained campaign

In September, Mishra had invited representatives of all political parties to discuss the problem. The ABVP was also invited to these parleys, at which, according to ABVP national Secretary Sushil Kumar Modi the district magistrate appealed to all parties to cooperate with the administration in the identification of aliens.

Mishra's meeting was a sequel to a secret visit by a team of officials from the Union Home Ministry. According to the ABVP, the team's confidential report stated that at least 103 villages in the area contained aliens. The ABVP's Anti-infiltrators Action Committee immediately demanded review of the electoral rolls as was being done in Assam, and the Election Commission agreed.

Strong Agitation: But alongside the official process, the ABVP has also distributed forms for the verification of electoral rolls in six constituencies through its volunteers. Said Modi: "This is only the first phase. We estimate that at least 20,000 Bangladeshis have got their names registered in the voters list and we have to find them out. We treat all Bhatias (a predominant Muslim community), barring a few families, as foreigners." The ABVP has successfully called for strikes several times in the recent past.

The agitators argue forcibly, presenting a battery of population statistics to back their case. The ABVP has conducted a survey in the area during the past four years. They claim that while the Muslim population of Purnea district decreased by 16.28 per cent during the decade 1941-51, there was a phenomenal growth of 42.44 per cent during the succeeding decade.

And if the area that was transferred to West Dinajpur in 1956 is included, the increase in the population of Muslims would be 71.35 per cent. Purnea's total population increased by 37.02 per cent in the decade 1951-61—twice the state's population increase (19.77 per cent). Modi says that at least 3.5 lakh illegal immigrants have settled in the district during the last decade.

Vehement Denials: The move to screen a large number of the Muslims in the area has heightened communal tension. Muslim leaders have taken up the cudgels. Mohammad Hussain Azad, MLA and a former minister—who has often been accused of encouraging and protecting infiltrators—called the move "arbitrary and illegal".

Vehemently denying the charges levelled against him by those whom he dubs "communal forces", Azad said he had repeatedly written to the Government to inquire into the matter and take stern action against the forces that are trying to disrupt peace.

Rural Reconstruction Minister Rafique Alam, who the ABVP also accuses of protecting foreigners in order to create a 'vote bank', publicly complained to Rajiv Gandhi when he visited Purnea on October 10 that "vested interests and communal forces" were branding Muslims as Bangladeshi and conspiring to displace them. There was not a single case of illegal immigration in the region, he stated.

The 'notice' did not spare even political big-wigs. One of the 6,000 notices was served to the brother of former minister Moidur Rahman. The relatives of a legislator, Taslimuddin Ahmed, have also been served with a notice.

Ahmed, on the other hand, stated that 25 per cent of the Muslim names have been removed from the electoral rolls of Kishanganj, Barsoi, Kadwa, Azamnagar,



Anti-foreigner slogans: important stakes

Katihar, Purnea Sadar and Araria sub-divisions. In an effort to allay misgivings among the Muslims, Kundra clarified that the purpose was only to tally the old voters list with new ones, and that there was no need to panic.

THE MAIN target of the agitation is the community of Bhatia Muslims, who come originally from Bengal. The rural population of Muslims consists largely of three communities, the Bhatias, Bedias and Deshwals. The Bhatias are concentrated in the Kishanganj area while the Bedias live mainly in Katihar.

According to Azad, very few Muslims went to Pakistan at Partition, before which 80 per cent of the population of old Purnea district was Muslim. The land was concentrated in the hands of a few landlords, who brought over a large number of poor landless Muslims from nearby districts of Bengal, as they provided hardworking and cheap labour—along with loyalty.

According to officials, the land here was cheap and consequently a number of families from Bengal settled here. Since the Bhatias enjoyed political patronage, they were able to secure much of the land. The local tribals resented this and the antagonism between the Bhatias and the Santhal tribals dates from this period.

Violent Clashes: Indeed the present official moves were spurred by the carnage in Laxmipur village on July 29 this year, in which five Santhals were killed and their village plundered by militant Bhatias, following a land dispute. This incident was only

the latest in a series of violent disputes that erupted during the '70s.

In 1974, clashes resulted in the loss of 16 lives (mostly Bhatias). Again in July 1981, four Bhatias were done to death and in September that year, nine Bhatias and two Santhals were killed in a clash near Kuchibad in West Bengal.

According to the agitators, when the Bhatia landlords found their lands in danger from the Santhals who had become militant in the early '70s, they brought in large numbers of the community and—in order

to circumvent the land ceiling laws—registered land in their names. This further angered the Santhals (estimated population: 1 lakh in Purnea and 72,000 in Katihar).

Tensions escalated in a vicious spiral and the Bhatias began to organise themselves politically. They also resorted to violence and formed militant organisations.

Press Campaign: The mobilisation of the Bhatias found a ready and vociferous response among the RSS and ABVP activists in the area. Recently, the anti-infiltrators campaign has spread to West Bengal too, though the state is not an RSS stronghold. A few months ago, *The Statesman* of Calcutta published a survey showing heavy infiltration since 1976. The paper accused Kalimuddin Shams, a leftist leader, of helping them to obtain passports and ration cards in an organised racket. This was followed by a comment in *The Navbharat Times* estimating that at least 7,000 Bangladeshis enter Bihar and West Bengal every year.

Commenting on these reports, the Patna Urdu daily *Azimabad Express* spoke of a conspiracy to repeat Assam in Bihar and Bengal and called on the Government to take timely action. In the same vein, the Cuttack-based *Akhbar-e-Mashriq*, in an editorial published last fortnight, traced a conspiracy to oust Muslims from India since Independence. The attempt to demoralise and oust Muslims, the paper said, had taken various forms and the present slogan against infiltrators was the "modern version" of the old "transfer of population theory".

However, many of these statements on both sides are obviously coloured by sentiment and communal loyalty. And such situations have a nasty tendency of escalating to the point where—like Assam—they explode violently. The present identification process in Bihar should help to diffuse the situation.

—FARZAND AHMED



Congress(I) leader Azad: adamant stand

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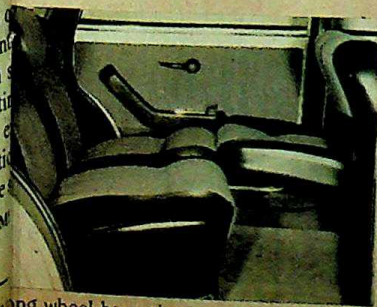
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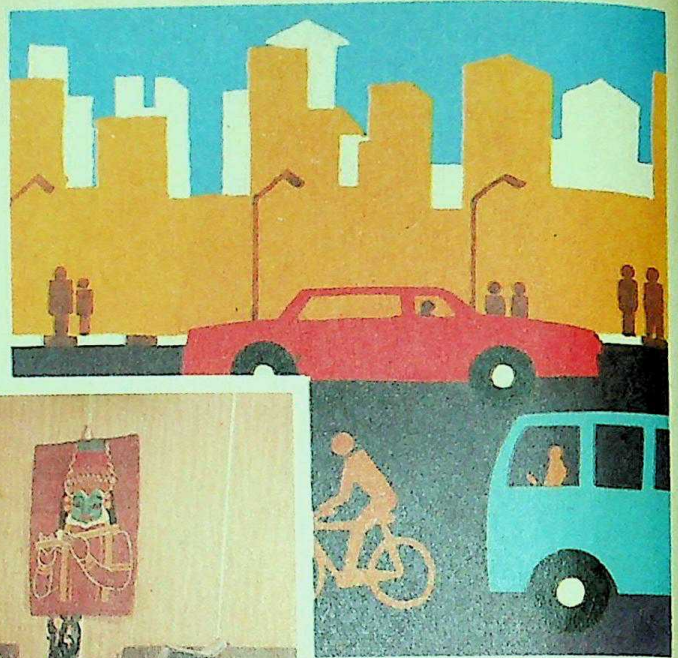
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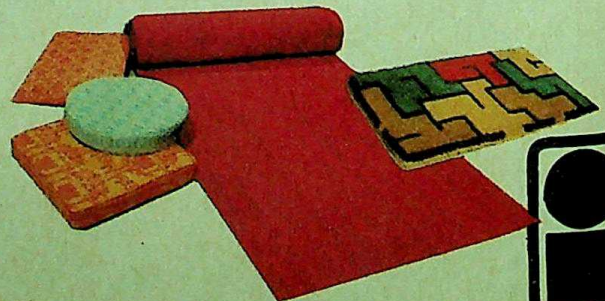
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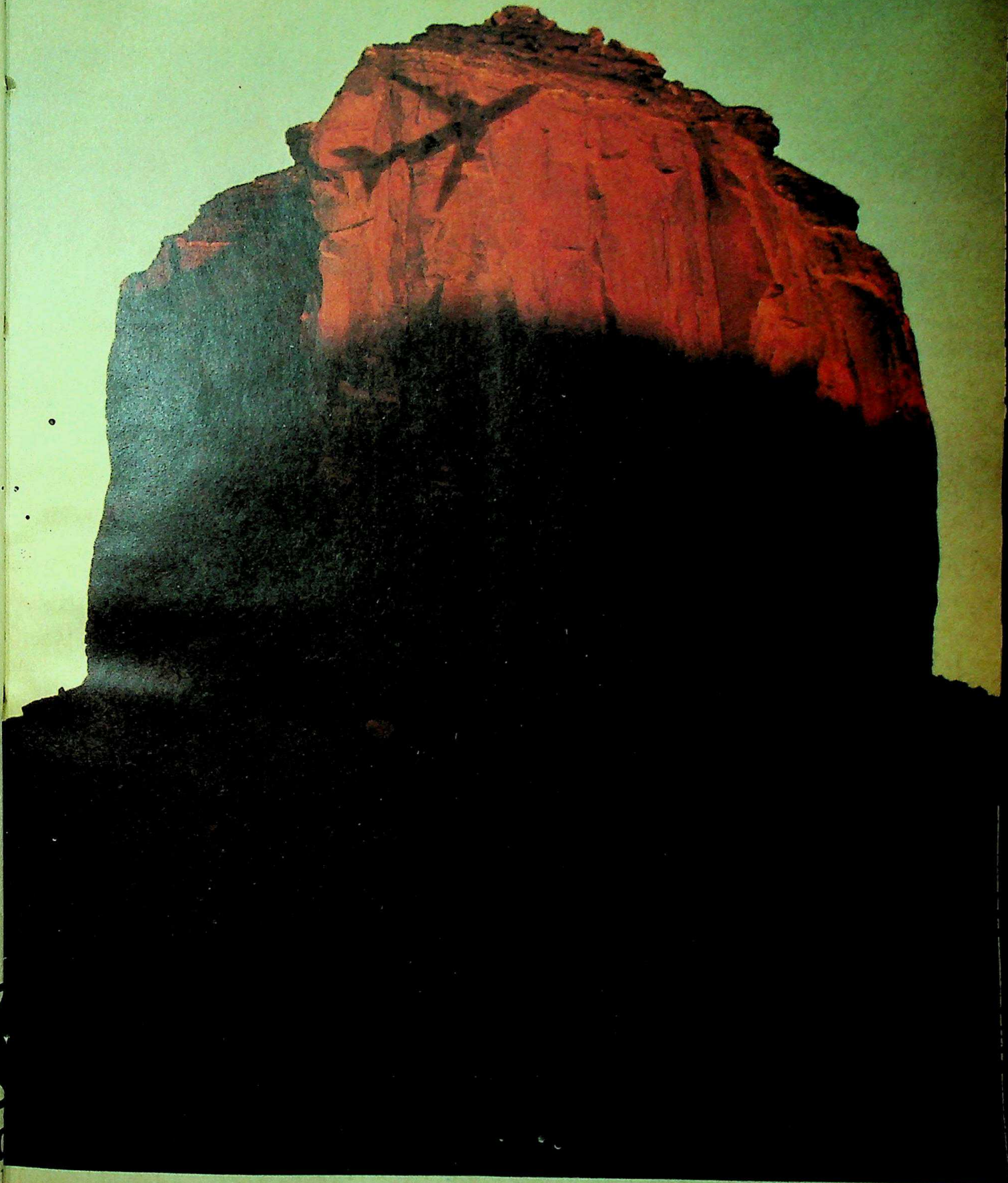


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GUJARAT

Unsettling Precedent

WHEN the Central Government transferred P. Subramaniam Poti to the Gujarat High Court from Kerala it must have known that the move would provoke a storm of protest. But it could hardly have been prepared for the prolonged agitation put up by the lawyers of Gujarat. The lawyers first boycotted the courts in the last week of September and have vowed to stay out till November 5. In the last few weeks the courts have only been hearing urgent cases.

The striking lawyers admit that they have no ill will towards Poti who has an impeccable reputation in the Kerala High Court. Their grouse is that he has been brought in from another state thereby depriving a highly respected local man, Justice P. D. Desai, of the job of chief justice. Desai was the seniormost judge of the Gujarat High Court and was next in line to become chief justice.

Lawyers in Ahmedabad claim that by moving Poti to Gujarat the Government has, so to speak, killed two birds with one stone. On the one hand it has removed Poti from Kerala where he was at loggerheads with the state Government. Only recently he made news when he issued notice to the Speaker of the Kerala Assembly Vakkom Purushottaman, in what came to be known as the 'press pass' case. Earlier he was also the judge who heard the Rajan murder case. Significantly Poti was kept as acting chief justice for over one and a half years. Desai also has a similar record in Gujarat. More than once he has shown that he is not afraid to take on the Government when the need arises.

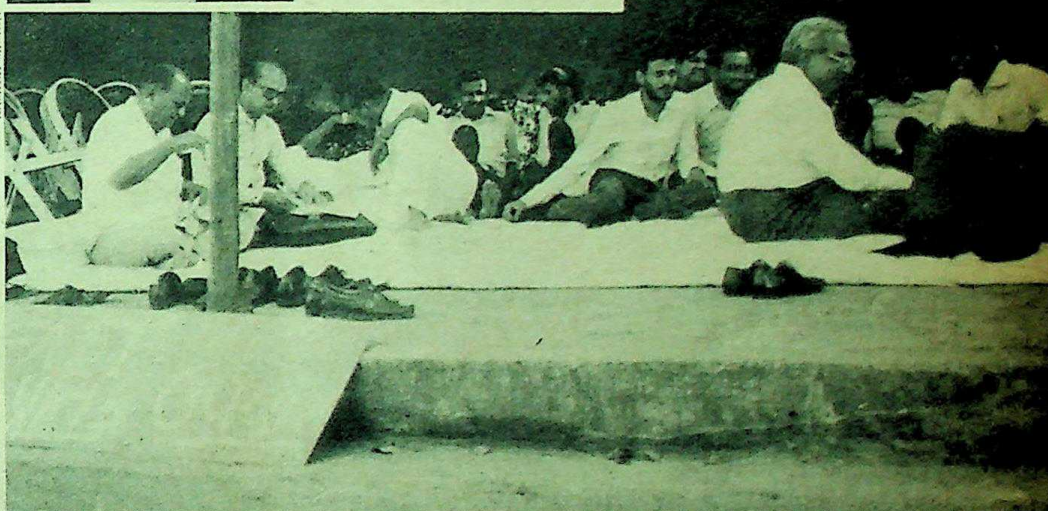
Delayed Decision: The post of chief justice fell vacant in March this year when the then chief justice M.P. Thakkar was elevated to Supreme Court. For a while the Government dilly-dallied keeping Desai as the acting chief justice. Finally the decision to transfer Poti to Gujarat was taken last month. Says J.C. Patel, president, Gujarat High Court Advocates Association: "We are not against Justice Poti but our only apprehension is that the Government's policy of appointment of judges endangers the independence of the judiciary." Adds Nirupam Nanavati, the convenor of the agitation committee: "Lawyers have no other way to show resentment but to go on strike. Unless they do this and influence the people, the Government will never change their policy."

But the strike has undoubtedly created fissures in the Bar itself. There are now two warring camps among the lawyers. One led by Haroobhai Mehta, a well-known senior lawyer and staunch supporter of the Congress(I) maintains that in cases of elevation, death, resignation and transfer of a chief justice the vacancy created is not a normal one. Under such circumstances, argues

informally said that Desai will have to wait six months before he is promoted as chief justice in another state. Desai is still on leave at the moment.

The agitation has had its ugly side. There are said to have been physical confrontations between the two groups. Mehta says that he was manhandled and had his shirt torn. Another lawyer, A.H. Mehta, is said to have had his car tyres punctured in the court premises.

Heavy Losses: But while such disputes go there can be no doubt that many lawyers are eager to get back to work. Each day they stay away costs them dearly in appearance fees. Many are trying to cut their losses by keeping up a normal schedule in chambers, meeting clients and taking on new cases. And though the agitation is weakening the strikers' claim that they have achieved their purpose. Says Girish Patel: "All is not lost. Our victory lies in the fact that the Government will think twice before haphazardly dealing with the transfer



(Clockwise from top left) Justice Desai, Chief Justice Poti, agitating lawyers outside Gujarat High Court: ignoring conventions

Mehta, the vacancy created is not an ordinary one as it speeds up the chances of promotion of any senior judge. According to him a normal vacancy would have been created only on November 4, 1985, when Thakkar was due to retire. Therefore, the argument runs that Desai should only have hoped for promotion then.

The other camp led by another senior lawyer Girish Patel disputes this view and takes the stand that a vacancy arising out of the elevation of a judge to the Supreme Court is a normal vacancy and that Desai is perfectly entitled to be promoted immediately. Sources in Ahmedabad say that the Chief Justice of India Y.V. Chandrachud has

and promotion of judges." Adds Bhaskar Tanna another high court advocate: "We also succeeded in ensuring that Justice Desai did not resign. The Government wanted him to and laid a trap for him."

The strikers are said to have held meetings in a senior judge's house. Says another judge: "Today they are agitating for the elevation of a judge. Tomorrow, consciously or unconsciously, judges will play up to the Bar as their future depends on them. By such an agitation lawyers are subtly making judges into puppets." That may be an exaggeration but the Government has landed trouble it never expected.

—RAMESH MENON

BOMBAY

City On The Brink

AS RECENTLY as a couple of years ago, opinion about Bombay was popularly divided into two. Depending on who you listened to, Bombay was either an overcrowded, nerve-racking, speeded-up slum that would sooner or later slide into the sea; or it was the ultimate symbol of Indian urbanity—glittering, prosperous and dynamic, and therefore assured of its survival. To be in Bombay was to savour something of the Indian dream, to want to be there spelt hope, and to live there was to inexorably become part of an intense organism whose combined human resource and energy would never ebb. The miracle of the city was that it worked: somehow, it functioned, despite its uninhabitable conditions of climate and topography and the additional burdens of its population and disparity. Bombay was cosmopolitan; it was orderly, generally law-abiding, and well-organised to provide public services. It was the sort of place where people stood properly in bus queues. To walk the streets of Bombay after dark was a safe venture compared to the hick-town hooliganism of New Delhi. To drive on its roads at day was a relief after the harrowing jams and pot-holes of Calcutta. As India's commercial capital and major international business centre, Bombay was the prodigy among Indian cities, a whiz-kid of financial genius.

Bombay's crisis is rooted in the paradox of this prosperity: the millions of hopefuls who stream into the city strain its ability to cope to breaking point; the numbers seem infinite, but land on an island is finite; there are no houses to be had for love or money, so the city attracts only those who can manage with a few square feet on a pavement; roads, trains, water, open spaces, clean air—all these are increasingly scarce. And in a city that somehow always managed to function, there is now a perceptible change of mood: things are going wrong, the city is on the skids.

The discernible sense of decline, is sometimes undefined but more often blatantly evident in the tangibles of everyday reality. The decline began in the late 1960s. The city's population till then, and thereafter, had been growing at a steady rate of roughly two million a decade: it rose from 4.1 million in 1961 to 5.9 million in 1971 to 8.2 million in the 1981 census. But the exact turning point in the city's life came with the subverting of growth from the northern mainland to the tongue of land that stretches into the sea at the southern tip. The sensationally sudden

development of the southern end of Bombay island against the advice of all planners, aggravated the congestion. Instead of deflecting the influx of people into the hinterland, they were pushed to seek jobs in the central and southern districts, creating an almost uncontrollable mass movement along the endangered north-south axis. As the city swung into the 1980s there was no relief in the new-found commercial jungle of Bombay. The urban dream began to assume the proportions of unending nightmare.

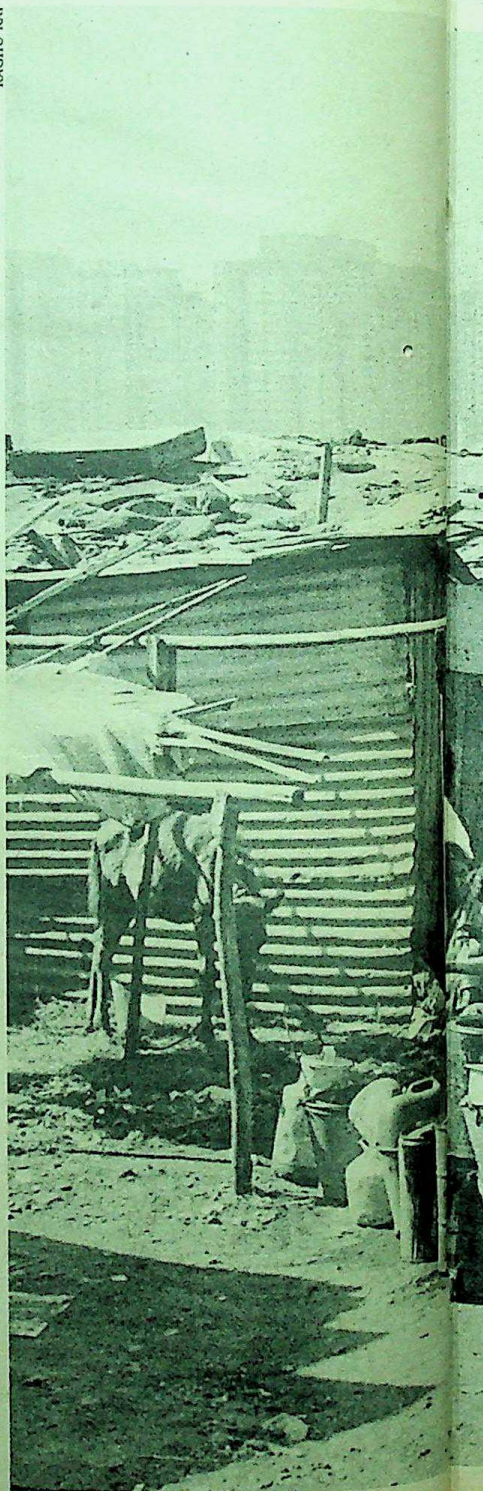
Grim Foreboding: The 'Save Bombay' chorus of a few years ago has today acquired the cutting edge of a dirge: can Bombay be saved at all, is the question asked most often these days. Probably not, is the answer because there are no longer two opinions about what sort of place it is to live in. While Bangalore flourishes industrially and Delhi blossoms magnificently in its garb of capital city, Bombay is choking itself with a rapidity that presages doom. When people speak of the quality of life in Bombay today the only comparable parallel they can find is Calcutta. A dedicated Save Bombay protagonist, Cyrus Guzder, who happens to be a trained archaeologist, takes the analogy further back into history: the decline of Bombay in the 1980s A.D., he argues, bears an uncanny resemblance to the disappearance of the Indus Valley Civilisation in the 1980s B.C. which occurred as a result of congestion, civic strife, drought and repeated flooding.

In terms of population, Bombay is among the most congested cities in the world, the figure unofficially close to the 9 million mark and with a density four times that of New York, at approximately 1 lakh people per sq mile. The breakdown in civic values was most brutally demonstrated last year when the city was engulfed in an orgy of violence as thousands of constables went on the rampage, leaving 10 dead, hundreds injured and scores of vehicles burnt. Earlier, the textile mill workers' strike demonstrated more than anything else, the growing militancy of the city's working force—and explained industrialists' eagerness to seek new industrial sites in more congenial places like nearby Gujarat. As for flooding, the city built on seven swampy islands is washed each year by high tides and torrential monsoon rains when large tracts of it are submerged in water. Drought will never hit Bombay, though water shortage is chronic; but if the ominous catalogue of disparity,

Bombay's twin worlds: poles apart

disrepair and decay continues, then Guzder's throwback to the end of the Indus Valley Civilisation may prove a remarkably pertinent parallel.

Commercial Capital: Yet there is an Indian parallel to Bombay in terms of commercial clout. As the country's most developed



RAGHU RAI

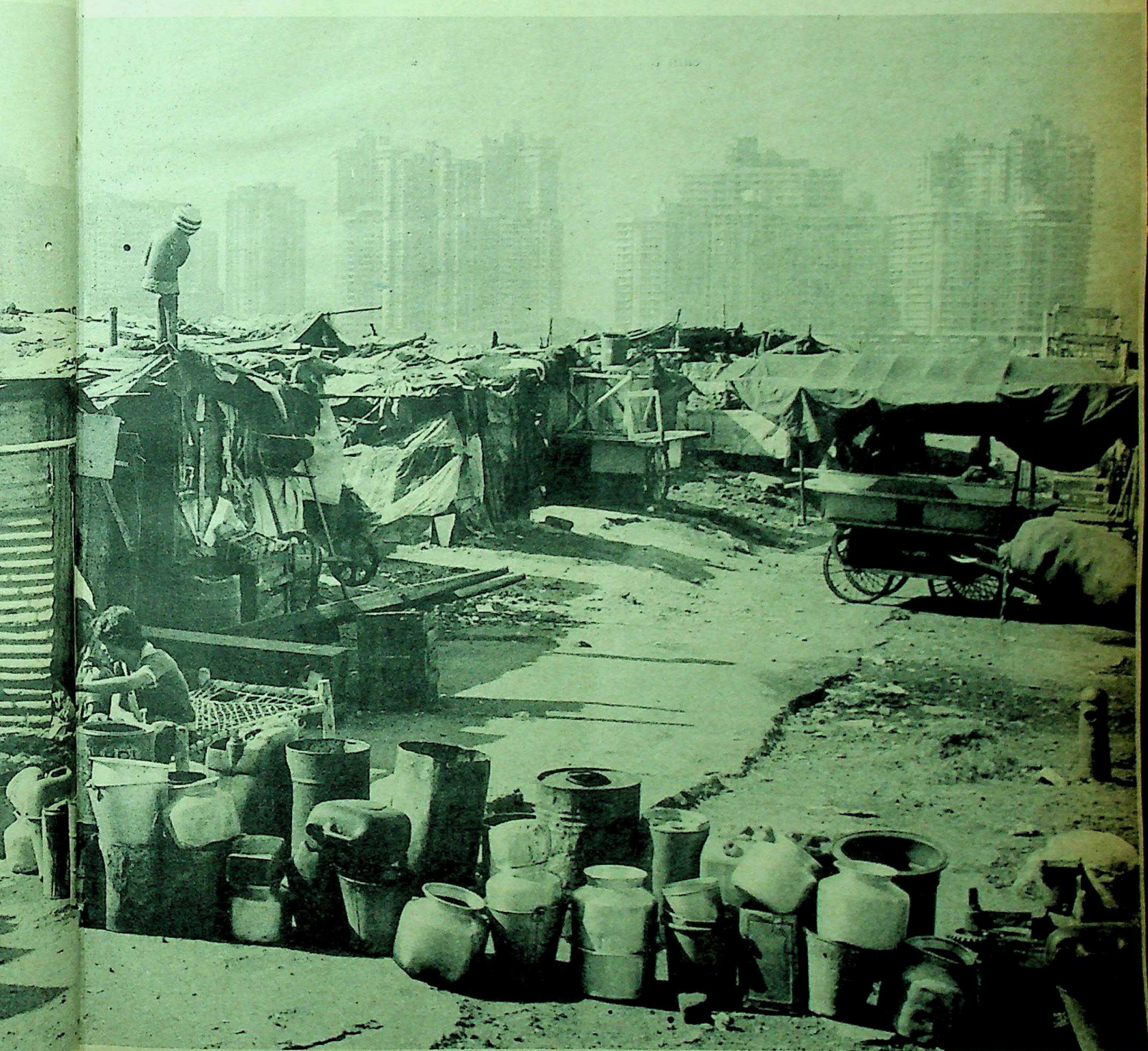
ed industrial and financial centre, it pays one-third of the country's income tax; 20 per cent of Central excise; 60 per cent of customs duty. And although the city has only 6 per cent of India's urban population, it generates one-tenth of its industrial jobs. Its textile mills spawn the largest cloth market in the world. Bombay port processes over 40 per cent of the country's maritime trade, according to Bombay biographer Gilman Tindall, and currently undertakes more fitting of shops than anywhere else in the world. And the Kerkar Committee estimates

that 60 per cent of international tourists to the country visit Bombay. All major corporations, financial institutions and banks maintain either their headquarters or major offices in Bombay. Overall trade in Bombay is a whopping Rs 25,000 crore, engaging some 1.5 million traders.

It is precisely this role as the country's financial powerhouse that is endangering its survival and threatening to paralyse its industrial expansion, the blinding push of job-seekers that has made living space an almost invaluable commodity and strained

the city's services to breaking point:

► Land prices in the exclusive areas of Bombay, such as Malabar Hill, have registered a 20-fold increase in two decades—from Rs 54 per sq ft to Rs 1,000 per sq ft. While pigeon-hole size two-bedroom flats can fetch up to Rs 12 lakh in Malabar Hill, four-bedroom duplex flats facing the sea could end up costing nearly Rs 70-80 lakh, with over half the payment to be made in black. These unbelievably exorbitant rates make the southern tip of the city the most expensive piece of real estate in South Asia;



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► The swell of population, and lack of housing, has transformed the face of the city into an all-encompassing slum. It is now officially admitted that "over 50 per cent" of the city's population, close to 4.5 million people, are pavement squatters or slum dwellers:

► Water supply in Bombay has deteriorated to an extent that in many unauthorised slums, per capita consumption of water has dropped to five gallons a day as against a UN minimum of 40 gallons a day. Although the city receives over 420 million gallons a day, an estimated 20 per cent is lost due to leakages and tampering of pipelines by slum dwellers;

► Open spaces in Bombay are one-third to one-fourth an acre per 1,000 people, against an internationally accepted norm of four acres per 1,000;

► Transport, the city's most severely taxed public service, is utilised to double its capacity. An estimated 8 million journeys are made each day on Bombay's trains and buses, with each suburban train carrying 3,500 people at peak hours whereas its normal capacity is for 1,200. And while suburban rail traffic increased five times during the past three decades, the available accommodation on the Central Railway was lagged hopelessly behind with a 225 per cent increase in the same period;

► The pressure on the city's telephone service is equally alarming. Of the 2.56 lakh telephone connections about 32,000 go dead, according to the Sarin Committee Report, each monsoon. Yet a telephone remains a much-prized utility: unauthorised out-of-turn connections are said to "sell" for a premium of Rs 12,000;

► Though Police Commissioner Julio Ribeiro quotes statistics to prove that incidence of crime has in fact fallen in the last nine months, the number of new recruits to the police force has hardly kept up with the population: the ratio of policemen to citizens has dropped from 1:265 in 1963 to 1:318 today;

► There are now 9 million rats in the city today, almost one per head of the population, and some 2.5 lakh stray dogs that aggravate the chronic spread of diseases gripping the city all year round. Health standards in the city have declined to the extent that residents are perpetually plagued by the ill-effects of over-crowding, pollution and a contaminated water supply. Bouts of diarrhoea, dysentery, worms and gastroenteritis are routine facts of life, and the water supply leads to frequent outbreaks of jaundice. But the availability of hospital beds in the city—a mere 25,000—remains woefully inadequate. Says Dr P.R. Aggarwal who has been treating patients in the lower middle class area of Koliwada for the last 13 years: "In the last two years there has been a dramatic

increase in the number of malaria cases. I used to treat two cases a month but now it is up to 12 cases—an increase of 600 per cent." According to him cases of venereal disease have shot up by 100 per cent in the last few years;

► Once virtually free of power and electricity shortage, Bombay's domestic consumers since 1979 have been asked to reduce their power consumption by 5 to 6 per cent or face the threat of having their power disconnected;

► The city has the maximum number of road accidents in the country, with an average of four people getting killed each day—four times the fatalities in Delhi. Often this is due to overcrowding of trains and streets.

THE PLUMMETING qualities of life are made more dismal by the ceaseless influx of further immigrants. As the city's most recent and erudite biographer Gillian Tindall points out in her book aptly titled *City of Gold*: "If Bombay had not continued commercially prosperous...then it would not have remained such a Mecca for incoming people seeking work, seeking money, seeking life itself in an escape from the grinding, near-static poverty of India's rural heartlands." A deluge of humanity pours in—at an estimated rate of 650 people a day—to seek a permanent future. At this rate, and adding the normal growth in population, the city will house at least 12 million people by 1990. This mass of humanity has to settle. The city today already contains 1.3 per cent of India's population.

It is not the slums that stick out anymore but the islands of prosperity among them; it is the glittering high-rises of Nariman Point that are conspicuous with their marbled foyers, and the air-conditioned penthouses and speeding limousines that convey the stark contrast of disparity. Forced to occupy or encroach any vacant plot of land, squatters and their dwellings, often made up of a few tin scraps, tarpaulin or dried palm fronds, are to be found in the heart of Colaba, at the foot of a Nariman Point building, along 10 ft wide strips of land separating the sea and fashionable residential high-rises of Napean Sea Road, in mammoth settlements such as infamous Dharavi which covers 80 hectares of public land with half a million people and has the dubious distinction of being the largest slum in Asia, along the route to the airport at Santa Cruz and way beyond, where they swamp the industrial estates of Malad and clamber on the verdant hillsides of the northern extremities of the city.

Galloping Increase: Though migration to the city remains a major reason for its uncontrollable growth, "the population growth of the last decade," points out the

HIGH LIFE

On The Wane

BOMBAY's most intrepid and acerbic columnist Busybee has said that high life in the city was made up of five kinds of people: those who went to Studio 29 for dancing, those who went to Mahalaxmi Racecourse for jogging, those who attended consulate parties, those who drank and those who went to hear Alyque Padamsee's heroines warbling. And, he wryly added, there was a fifth category of people who did nothing except talk of saving Bombay.

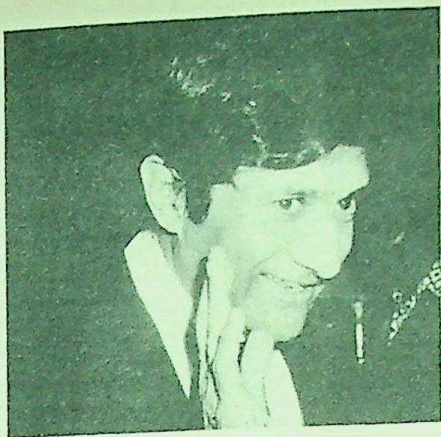
Discos being on the wane (The Scorpius has closed down. The 1900 hasn't taken off and Studio 29 isn't what it used to be), and jogging becoming hazardous owing to the crowds, talk of saving Bombay has now infiltrated the cold, thin air of upper class drawing rooms. Sitting in her beautiful bungalow (also famous, for author Salman Rushdie grew up there and immortalised it in *Midnight's Children*) and above Warde Road, Bombay businesswoman and hostess Sunita Pitamber admits that there was a time before the city hit the panic button that people at dinner parties used to talk about everything. "Now they talk of nothing but saving Bombay."

Closing In: As one ascends into the rarefied stratosphere of luxury penthouses and unpolluted beach-houses and life becomes happily incestuous, the squalor and almost village-like, the talk of saving Bombay becomes familiar. It has the ring of harsh black-and-white but of sepia tones. "Bombay," says Pitamber, meaning the kind of Bombay she and many others



"People tend to have become more ostrich-like than before—it is as if they want to shut out the physical deterioration around them."

—Parmeshwar Godrej



"If I open my windows or sit in the garden my nostrils are filled with this nauseating stench. The municipality trucks just dump garbage and no one seems to complain."

—Dev Anand

knew, "is all nostalgia. Suddenly the real thing hits you between the eyes. Suddenly a lot of people are saying, My God, we'd rather be living in Delhi." The rich and the beautiful and the accompanying flotsam of the fast set are apparently feeling the pinch too. Though there are diehard figures like Studio 29 owner Sabira Merchant who try to colour their lives by holding family celebrations in which everything is dressed up in blue—blue mithai boxes to match the blue sari of the bride-to-be—others who used to be the frenetic swingers of the 1970s feel jaded, faded and fed up with the idea of attending nightly bashes.

"The age of the wild party is over," says chubby-faced industrialist Ajit Singh who, besides running a modern capsule-producing plant also possessed a reputation as a furious party-thrasher. He thinks the city's high life has moved into low gear "because the younger generation somehow doesn't share the frenzy of our time—fewer younger people can afford places of their own so there are fewer parties."

Degeneration: While the upper class Parsi and Gujarati gentry escape more frequently to their retreats in Koregaon Park in Pune to attend the races, the refrain of "Let's go to the club for some fresh air" is heard less often. One reason is that the snobbish precincts of the city's fashionable Willingdon Club—popularly known as the "WC"—are bedevilled with what one Parsi regular calls "unbearable bearer trouble". Ever since club em-

ployees joined Datta Samant's striking force for better wages, self-help is the norm and the club's trellised verandah known as My Lady's Garden wears a grubby, forlorn look.

Complains Dev Anand, the city's ageless star who came to Bombay in 1945 when Juhu Beach was what a beach should be: languorous, tranquil, with vast stretches of sand and sea: "Today the worst part is that if I open my windows or sit in the garden my nostrils are filled with this nauseating stench. The municipality trucks just dump garbage and no one seems to complain."

Dev Anand wonders how his neighbourhood—whose occupants include film stars Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra and Manoj Kumar—put up with it. If one day the film industry just moves out lock, stock and barrel, I won't be surprised."

Sheer physical disparity in lifestyles has taken its toll. It has led wealthy Marwari and, Sindhi businessmen to mount entertainments strictly behind closed doors. "People tend to have become socially more ostrich-like than before—it is as if they want to shut out the physical deterioration around them," says interior designer and socialite Parmeshwar Godrej. Her own parties, she says, have become fewer and smaller. As she puts it: "There simply isn't the time—I myself spend three hours on the road commuting daily from home to my place of work."

Vanishing Image: While five-star culture flourishes and restaurants show no drop in clientele, the city's good times-in-fun town image is wearing thin. Painful commuting distances (traffic jams), bad communication links (telephones), pol-



"I have nowhere to take my children to play. Hanging Gardens is simply choked with people."

—Maureen Wadia



"Bombay is all nostalgia. Suddenly the real thing hits you between the eyes. Suddenly a lot of people are saying, My God, we'd rather be living in Delhi."

—Sunita Pitamber

lution (dirty beaches), and a high-pressure pace of life has cut into social life, though shrewdly points out one industrialist: "There is no indication of less wealth around—it's just become less visible. More and more people drift outside the city for the good life—they go to Goa or to week-end shacks in Alibagh or, if they can afford it, they go abroad."

Maureen Wadia, wife of the chairman and managing director of Bombay Dyeing, Nusli Wadia, who represents old wealth and aristocratic style says that, for her, the biggest change of the last couple of years that "I have nowhere to take my children to play. Hanging Gardens is simply choked with people." She thinks the social scene has deteriorated to such an extent that her husband and she have turned positively "anti-social". "The kind of parties that are the scene now are made up of a few film stars, cricket stars and the new rich from Hong Kong or Nigeria. They start at 2 a.m. and end at 5 a.m. It's a bit much."

About the only major concessions to large-scale and lavish entertaining are functions put on by the film crowd, receptions held by foreign consulates and corporate parties footed by expense accounts—all three entertainments are regarded as PR exercises and generally boring. "That kind of thing," says Pitamber with a dismissing wave of her hand, "goes on. I call it the Nescafe society. And that's about all that's happening."

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report of the high power steering group for slums and dilapidated houses otherwise known as the Ajit Kerkar Committee Report, "is more largely because of natural increase." Submitted two years ago to the then chief minister of Maharashtra A.R. Antulay, the report warned: "Any future unemployment coupled with social pressures building up in the overcrowded city could lead to the total breakdown of the city and the disruption of both its economy and law and order. More important is that with no city in a position to take over all of Bombay's major roles...the effects on the country's economy could be very serious."

The warnings of the Kerkar Committee Report have no doubt been consigned to the shelf, exactly like the sayings of dozens of past expert committees appointed and forgotten, the most crucial promoting the development of the twin township of New Bombay which was to have come up across the harbour.

The New Bombay concept mooted in the mid-1960s was designed to consist of nodal townships, each one self-sustaining in the jobs and housing it offered, which would eventually take the pressure off Bombay island and halt the development of south Bombay. According to planners like Xerxes Desai, currently managing director of Tata Press and formerly on loan from the Tatas to the City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra (CIDCO), a commercial venture set up to build New Bombay, and architect Charles Correa who designed it, the idea was to be able to accommodate a population of one million in New Bombay by 1983 and two million by 1991 in an effort to decongest the southern limit of the city. In fact, only one lakh people have moved to New Bombay so far with no infrastructure of telephones and transport to the mainland provided. Says Correa: "It is nothing but the myopia of our government that has led us to squander our city away."

Government Apathy: Adds President of the Bombay Regional Congress Committee(I) Murli Deora: "Bombay has become one perpetual scramble for jobs, tenements, households in buses and trains, water, electricity, rations and schools. Civic amenities meant to serve about 20 lakh people are being utilised by 85 lakh people."

The Government has not only been singularly responsible for the disproportionate increase in land prices, it has inexplicably kept large tracts of public land vacant. Almost all experts are agreed that there are substantial chunks of empty land in Bombay which could be crucial to solving the acute housing problem. Estimates of how much and is available vary: according to the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) there could be anything between 3,000 acres and

10,000 acres of vacant land; and according to Xerxes Desai a 1978 survey of land used shows that half of the city's 46,000 hectares are vacant. "This constant claim that there is just no land to build on does not hold water. After all one should remember that from Colaba to Mahim and Chembur accounts for only 15 per cent of the area of Greater Bombay. I cannot understand why the Government is hesitant to reveal the exact figures of vacant land in the city." PUCL has further statistics to show how the Government's almost non-existent housing policy has set the city skidding on a course to disaster. "If the Government cannot provide houses," says former Janata Party MP and MLA Mrinal Gore, "let them legally issue plots so people can build themselves. Otherwise, they have no recourse but to take the law into their own hands and grab it."

WITH slum and pavement dwellers seemingly taking over the city, Bombay's well-heeled tend to turn on the poor. In a typical example, Antulay announced in 1981 in his sledge-hammer fashion that he planned to deport 1 lakh slum dwellers and issue tickets to non-Maharashtrians among them to return to their home states. This caused a public outcry as in blinding monsoon rain terrified families were herded into state transport and carried away. Their plight was so pathetic that PUCL immediately filed a writ petition; and journalist Olga Tellis and lawyer Indira Jaisingh sought action from the Supreme Court independently on the grounds that the right to squat was a fundamental right. The Supreme Court's interim order stayed all large-scale demolitions in the city for a year, and its judgement which is expected shortly, is expected to have far-reaching repercussions for urban slums country-wide.

Slums in Bombay have proliferated at double the rate since then, so that last fortnight, when Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil announced at the All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I) session in Bombay that he would remove Bombay's slums in two years, few understood what he was talking about. Virtually all his predecessors have turned a blind eye to the problem of slum dwellers not least of all because slums constitute captive vote-banks.

Conflicting Stands: This summer the city's Municipal Commissioner, D.M. Sukthankar, went ahead with demolitions anyway, and in the process managed to whip up considerable support from middle class Maharashtrians who have been elbowed out by the encroachments.

The presence of the pavement dwellers now poses a moral dilemma and has polarised opinion. Says Govind Talwalkar, editor of *The Maharashtra Times*: "These Pedder

LOW LIFE

A Daily Battle

AUTHOR V.S. Naipaul once observed that in Bombay you can always find some form of life lower than whatever miserable state you have observed. Today, slum life in Bombay no longer constitutes life—you are expected to specify what kind of slum, what kind of pavement since the degree of deprivation, like the degree of affluence, varies every few square metres. There are slums where dwellers switch on technicolour lights and have ceiling fans, there are others where residents open a refrigerator and offer you a cold drink, there are slums



"Things became very bad recently when the landlord put locks on the common toilets and demanded that residents deposit Rs 1,000 for their use."

—N.V. Poojari

where the only space where women can bathe are two stone slabs three feet square, screened by tatters of jute and rags. And there are slums where there is nothing—no water or power and virtually no shelter, only a few pats of damp mud rising out of swampy, stinking, putrefying marshland. At least these conditions are nothing.

In Goregaon East, there is one such slum where recent squatters from district Jalna in Marathwada have made their home in empty plots in a down-at-the-heel industrial estate. A few scrawny chickens grovel in the filth of the cramped huts; a woman is making rotis on a fire lit

wood shavings. Her husband, she says, is away at work: he collects cow-dung from stables and sells it as fuel in better-off slums. They came to Bombay two years ago to escape starvation. "If there was food in the village, why would we have come here? There is nothing here. You should see it in the rains. Water comes up to our knees," says the woman resignedly.

Pathetic Conditions: In another pocket of shanties across the road, even more pathetic than the first, a man called Pandhari Tekhade, who arrived in Bombay in the late 1960s after a famine in Khandesh, says he still earns his wage in the city doing odd jobs like cleaning lorries. "Of course," he agrees, "life is worse than in the village. But what is happiness? Happiness is being able to at least eat." Asked if there is any rudimentary toilet, Tekhade points to a marshy plot along the main highway close to the Nirlon factory. "We go there," he says simply.

Life in other slums compares better with the wretchedness of such lower depths. Ovadipada is an example of a organised, fairly prosperous basti along the main road in Borivili in the northern end of Bombay. It resembles a self-sufficient little township, its boundaries provided with a pan shop, a grocery store and even a kiosk selling cold drinks. Inside, the lanes are clean with cement drains, electricity fixtures outside doors and nameplates. A room fifteen feet square here can cost Rs 30,000.

N.V. Poojari, from Udipi district in Karnataka, who has lived in Bombay for 20 years and works as a peon in Rallis India, lives in one such room. When he moved to Ovadipada he bought the place for Rs 11,000: since then, he has constructed a kitchen at the back, put in a tiled floor, "bought" three electricity connections and his young son now has a proper school desk complete with a table fan. Poojari earns Rs 1,100 a month, but much of it is spent paying off the slum landlord who demands a price for every facility. "You pay Rs 30 a month for living here, another Rs 30 for every electricity point in the room, Rs 20 a month for water. Things became very bad recently when the landlord put locks on the common toilets and demanded that residents deposit Rs 1,000 for their use." Other residents of Ovadipada complain bitterly of continuous extortion by the slum landlords. Says one: "You have to pay for every wall, there are different owners for each. If a room has four walls you have to sometimes end up paying rent to three different owners."



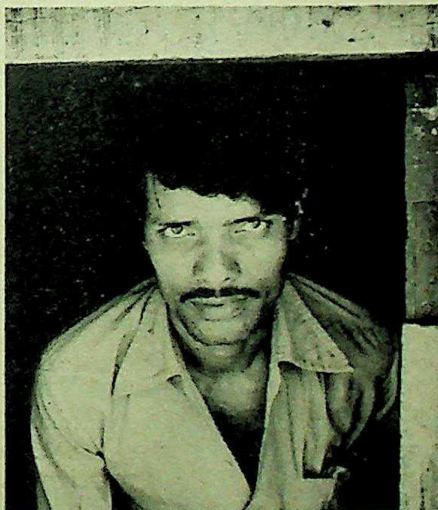
"Of course life is worse here than in the villages. But what is happiness? Happiness is being able to at least eat."

—Pandhari Tekhade

Demanding Life: Life for that vast segment of the city population loosely known as the middle class can be as competitive and harrowing especially when they are being driven out to live in slums. Miles beyond Santa Cruz, in the thick of the industrial estates of Malad, shanty towns have sprouted on the hilly tracts deep in the hinterland. At the end of a long track with stones sharp as knives, across a dirty stream, and high along a ridge in the hill is the new *jopadpatti*

called Waishet Pada. Living conditions are slightly better than the earlier slums: at least there is fresh air to breathe and dwindling stretches of green country. But the astonishing fact about this slum is that all its 300-odd inhabitants formerly lived in Parel: most of them were textile mill workers who were slowly forced to move out because of their growing families.

Ramibai is one such: an immigrant, originally from Ratnagiri who looks old beyond his 28 years. He was pushed out of his family's one-room set in a chawl because the room couldn't accommodate the size of the growing family any more. "This place seemed ideal for me," he says of his perch on the hillside, "it was clean, uncrowded and cheap." He explains that the slum that has materialised there since he moved in was originally a forest encroachment. "But we've managed everything in six years: a water connection, power connection, everything. You know how Bombay is," he says, making a gesture to indicate money changing hands, "if you grease a few palms, everything works."



"We've managed everything in six years: a water connection, power connection, everything... if you grease a few palms, everything works."

—Ramibai

The only problem is that it now takes him two hours to get to work. "But it's like that for most people in Bombay." For Ramibai there is no alternative to living in Bombay. His job, family and future are here. Like millions of others for whom survival has become a daily battle, Ramibai somehow always manages to find a way of making things work.

load liberals are trying to appease their social consciousness at everybody else's expense." Retorts lawyer Jaisingh: "Of course there is growing polarisation in the city. You can't go on dividing the haves and the have-nots. Unless there is a more equitable distribution there will be a civil war in the streets."

Antulay, who sticks by his deportation operation, says that the growth of the city can only be checked by restricting the entry of further immigrants in the city. "Unless a person shows signs of a profession or income, his entry into the city should be restricted." Dr Rafiq Zakaria, deputy Congress(I) leader in the Rajya Sabha, concurs and says: "We have reached a complete saturation point." He recommends that a law be enacted to check migration even if it means altering the Constitution.

Insecure Existence: Gore and others in the northern Bombay constituency of Goregaon are vehemently arguing the case for not the very poor in the slums but the city's most beleaguered class: the vast, shifting sea of humanity that constitutes the middle class and has traditionally been the backbone of Bombay. Says Govind Talwalkar: "The worst thing to happen in the city is its loss of middle class character. The money-bags and gum dwellers, who have deluged the city in recent migratory waves, have taken over. There isn't much social stability left. Anything can happen now because people have no roots."

Social worker and politician Gore notes that Goregaon, where she has lived since the late 1940s, has become yet another faceless, nameless, anonymous segment of no-man's-land from being a well-knit, socially integrated community. The old community spirit of the suburbs, she says, has disappeared. And the resulting imbalances in ethnic groupings could seriously affect Bombay's long-held, dearly-cherished value of being secular and cosmopolitan.

The downgrading of the middle class is what urban anthropologists call "degentrification"—a process by which the living standards of the middle class get poorer—even though their incomes are higher. Neela Chitambar, a corporator from Goregaon, gives an example of this. She says that there is a popular misconception about slums like Dharavi being so prosperous that people living there possess TV sets and videos and repatriate thousands of rupees a day back to their villages. "Look at it this way," she says, "it's not the poor slum dwellers who can afford TV sets and videos but sections of the middle class who are being driven out to live in Dharavi." A glaring example of this is the steady emptying of a textile mill workers' area like Parel or traditional bastions of the

Gujarati and Maratha middle class like Gamdevi, Girgaum and Kalbadevi.

Desperate shortages of housing, power, public transport and medical facilities are further intensified for an embattled middle class by an equally chronic shortage of schools. Although fees vary from Rs 7 a month for a municipal school to Rs 500 for a smart public school, getting a seat is considered a veritable feat. "Donations" of anywhere between Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 can be demanded for out-of-turn admittance. Says an affluent lawyer, P. Vakil: "I rushed within 24 hours of my son's birth to register his name at Tinytots Playschool on Marine Drive and at Cathedral and Campion schools." Businessman K.K. Agrawal admits to having paid a "donation" of Rs 10,000 to have his child admitted into a leading public school—earlier the school had claimed that ad-

mission wasn't possible because the child had a stammer.

For the rich in Bombay, it could be argued, life is cushy. When the crunch finally comes and the city goes bust, they will be the only ones unaffected by it. That impression is not strictly true. Nothing has changed the social ethos of Bombay like the altered methods of making money and the kind of people who make it.

Kisan Mehta, who now heads the Save Bombay organisation, claims that as opposed to the grim condition of the city's public transport, there are only 2 lakh private cars in Bombay. These 2 lakh vehicles carry 3 lakh people, which works out a car each for approximately 1.6 persons. "If that isn't a disparity of life-style, then what is?" he asks.

What highlights the disparity is not just the painfully high visibility quotient of



Outside Churchgate station: the daily grind

quatters to be seen against glamorous high-rises, the mountains of garbage against the cool marble-and-plateglass pleasure homes of five-star culture, the sight of sputtering 17-year-old buses against air-conditioned limos. What has changed radically, as emphasised repeatedly by sections of the city's established gentry, is that the old rich have been steadily displaced by successive waves of carpetbaggers who have creamed the town and moved out to pastures new. Few of them have contributed to the ethos of the city, few have regarded it as their own, almost none has contributed a fraction of their fortunes towards the welfare of the city. In the old days," says senior corporator B.K. Boman Behram, "the Wadias or the Tatas were great philanthropists—they created hospitals, schools, residential areas like Cushrow Baug—and they propagated a

sharing of wealth. All that has gone." Their place has been taken by chiefly two kinds of fast-buck invaders in the past two decades: the smugglers and the builders, both operating in cahoots with the political bosses. Adds industrialist S.P. Godrej who is presently sheriff of the city: "We were proud of this city but we are now outnumbered by the builders and politicians."

SPECIFICALLY, it was the development of Backbay that, more than making a mockery of planned development in the city, altered its entire ethos. The system of quid pro quo was introduced on a major scale by the late Rajni Patel, the suave, Cambridge-turned criminal lawyer with leftist pretensions who joined the Congress Party in 1969 and became its legendary fundraiser. Then the chief minister V.P. Naik

may have set the ball rolling by quietly taking away the Backbay portfolio from the Urban Development Ministry (in fact, till today, this file for some reason remains with the chief minister) but the beginnings of "selling out" Bombay were small-scale.

Corruption: It was Patel's emergence on the scene that saw the selling of the sea itself. Granting of plots and increased floor space indices (FSI's) was arbitrary: between April 1970 and January 1971 the state Government received unsolicited offers from 17 parties for 20 unreclaimed plots measuring 78,000 sq m at anywhere between Rs 2,750 and Rs 4,050 per sq m, the Government's specious argument being that it would be unrealistic to call for tenders. In all, about 200 acres of land was earmarked for reclamation. *Blitz* Editor R.K. Karanjia recalls the first flush of money-making in real estate clearly: "Money was said to change hands between politicians and builders at cocktail parties. Apparently part-payments were made at parties for permission to build the concrete jungles at Nariman Point and Cuffe Parade. It was around election time and money was needed." Karanjia now fears that, with another election around the corner, "Similar hanky-panky will be attempted". His fears are justified. In the recently issued Bombay Draft Development Plan of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, the waterbody that still exists between Nariman Point and Cuffe Parade has been shown as reclaimed though it bears the "no development zone".

People like editor Karanjia and architect Correa find this label "ominous", as it suggests a possibility of the Government sneakily reclaiming the land and selling it at some later stage.

Falling Business: The building boom petered out under the Emergency and the Urban Land Ceiling Act of 1976, which insisted on an NOC (no objection certificate) from the Government for selling any plot over 500 sq m, and the income tax amendment passed last year that made it compulsory for every land transaction of over Rs 25,000 to be registered with the authorities. Many builders, some of them erstwhile COFEPOSA detenus, went scurrying off to Bangalore and the Middle East. A comparatively small number of—130 of them—are still registered in the city, but the business remains the strangle hold of just a dozen or so. The top three building families of Bombay today—the Makers, Rahejas and Mittals—are stirring examples of success stories spawned during the heyday of building. A far cry from the professional builders of an earlier time such as Shapoorji Pallonji.

The building slump has worsened with the state Government's announcement of the housing policy which allows private



COVER STORY

builders to construct low-cost housing on private land under the Urban Land Ceiling Act. But while professional politics and smuggling continue as the twin boom businesses in town, the diamond trade has overtaken building as third.

Controversies: Still, the changed atmosphere of the last two decades has not even spared the most reputable of industrial houses such as the Tatas, who have generally maintained an exceptional record of civic responsibility. The present controversy arises from their decision to go ahead with another 500 mw unit at their thermal power station at Trombay. This has aroused strong protests from environmentalists who argue that besides polluting New Bombay, the additional capacity will bring in a million tonnes of

► In another area marked as part of a green belt in the plan, the Government is planning to build officers' quarters.

Growing public pressure from social and civic groups, from environmentalists and through public service litigation, has served to highlight the city's precarious future. Shyam Chainani, secretary of the Bombay Environmental Action Group, says: "There are probably more environmental groups in Bombay than in all other metro cities put together. This remarkable awareness of the need to rectify matters is one of the few healthy signs in a city otherwise dying." One noticeable example of social activism is the Bandra Land's End case where local citizens have been fighting the Government for 10 years to get a prime

decades. Shortages, if they continue at the present rate, will be so acute that scarcity alone will kill the city: water will fall short by 350 million gallons a day and 650 tonnes of garbage will pile up on the streets. Pesticidal diseases, continuous breakdowns, and complete erosion of law and order will scorch the city into a wasteland of corruption and crime. Is it hard to imagine a city finally abandoned and left to ruin like the mysterious vanishing of the Indus Valley Civilisation?

There clearly isn't enough time. But the city has to survive and the most powerful post of Indian industrial culture to be saved. Immediate development measures have to be implemented. Some of them:

- The shifting of the state capital as well as state government offices to locations outside Greater Bombay;

- The shifting of major industrial units such as the textile mills, engineering, chemical and pharmaceutical industries to locations outside Bombay or to other regions of Maharashtra;

- Shifting of wholesale markets now located in the island city to the suburbs. A great extended suburb, already in danger of becoming only the wholesale potato and onion market,

- Moving of major rail and truck terminals currently in south Bombay to the suburbs in an effort to relieve pressure on the city and Churchgate stations. The idea is to provide centralised access to all residents of Greater Bombay as well as break the north-south communication axis on which the entire city operates;

- Land released as a result of these measures should be used for low-income housing with new construction adhering to an FSI of 0.5 in the island city and in the suburbs.

Clearly, the onus for this mammoth task lies with the state Government. And immediate action it can take to express its will to act is to move itself out. Unless a vital decision can be taken and a planned concerted effort promptly set into motion, Bombay by century's end will be an urban basket case, a certified disaster. Cities do not perish overnight, but as Calcutta has shown, all too tragically, once the slide starts, downhill momentum simply accelerates. As the city's population mounts, the unrestrained push of people seeking jobs, seeking a better urban life are choking the life of the city itself. Bombay's unique pattern of growth will surely ring its death-knell. It is not beyond hope, there is still time to infuse ideas, money to keep it from toppling. But if warnings are not heeded that precarious perch will be jettisoned all too soon, Bombay will fall slowly off the precipice.

—SUNIL SETHI and COOMI KAPOOR



In Bombay's suburban trains: packed like sardines

coal each year and disperse half a million tonnes of ash.

In fact, Bombay's indiscriminate development proves repeatedly that political expediency has held sway over the plans of experts and the needs of the city. Some glaring violations of the past few months in the imperilled Backbay-Cuffe Parade area:

- The foundation of a 12-storey residential building for ministers has been laid in an area earmarked as a green belt in the new draft plan. The Colaba-Cuffe Parade residents' association last month obtained a stay order to stop construction;

- A high-rise building for MLA quarters has been planned with an FSI of 3.66, which is way above the accepted norm of 1.33;

- The state Government is planning to go ahead with three 21-storey-high buildings at the World Trade Centre against the wishes of the municipal corporation;

piece of property declared as park land. Such action is imperative. In the year 2,000 A.D.—a matter of 16 years from now—if matters don't improve, Bombay will be over the brink. The population would have hit the 16 million mark, 75 per cent of it living in slums. The housing shortage will be of about 2.5 million units. Pressure on suburban transport will shoot up by 300 per cent, making travel at peak hours like stepping into barely mobile torture chambers. Unemployment will be close to the two million mark and traffic on the streets would have gone up by 2.5 lakh vehicles—with the turn-of-the-century car crawling along at an average speed of 5 km per hour.

Future Shock: The turn of the century scenario, improbable though it sounds today, is far from being unrealistic, given the standards of apathy, dishonesty and blatant lack of planning by governments in previous

SRINAGAR

The Jewels Of Kashmir

EVEN a talented fairy-tale writer would be hard pressed to describe them adequately. The Kashmir crown jewels, that recently spawned much controversy, ranks as one of the most exquisite collections anywhere, all the more appealing for having lain undisturbed in steel boxes in a remote Srinagar vault for close on four decades.

The legacy of the Dogra rulers of the state, the thousand and odd pieces of jewelery gleam with a life of their own in the dull light of the small room in Srinagar's Treasury office. Along with the crowns and ceremonial swords, are sparkling necklaces, bracelets, rings, bangles, robes, daggers, watches to lo and even toys—all estimated to be worth several score crore of rupees.

Among the more striking items are:

► A glittering ring studded with all the traditional nine gems arranged around a 10-carat diamond worth approximately Rs 15 lakh.

► Two diamond necklaces containing 200 blue diamonds, estimated at Rs 50 lakh.

► Hundreds of rubies from Sri Lanka and Burma, all of the same colour—though normally, it is difficult to get even two rubies of exactly the same colour.

► 20,000 pearls—the largest known collection of them—mostly imported from Basra and Iraq.

► Rudraksha beads with a single furrow and even twin beads.

Two boxes from the treasury containing 67,000 tolas (1 tola-11.66 gm) of gold were donated to the National Defence Fund in 1963 in response to Nehru's nationwide appeal for donation of gold following the Chinese attack.

Inadequate Security: Many other items seem to have been separated from

The late Maharaja Hari Singh (right) and his insignia: priceless hoard



the main collection. However, Dewan Iqbal Nath, the *Toshakhana* officer, the custodian of the treasure, is tightlipped: "I don't know anything. Ask the secretary," he repeats in a monotone. A retired revenue secretary in the state Government, he was appointed custodian in 1957 on Rs 400 a month. "This seems good enough for him, for he doesn't have the least knowledge of any of the items he is guarding in ordinary boxes like a poisonless snake," said an officer in the chief minister's secretariat.

The attitude is typically bureaucratic. Meanwhile, the six huge boxes containing the treasure continue in the doubtful security of the Treasury strong room, which is opened twice a day for withdrawal of

currency. Says P.L. Raina, the senior geologist in the Department of Geology: "A proper cataloguing giving historical background of each and every item is a must." But repeated requests by the Treasury Department to the Government for guaranteed security have been unheeded.

The Treasury has been the home of the jewels since 1846, when Maharaja Gulab Singh, the first Dogra ruler, bought the state from the British for Rs 75 lakh. The collection began with some jewels that were presented by Gulab Singh's mentor, Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore. When the last Maharaja, Sir Hari Singh, fled the state in the wake of the tribal raid in 1947, the trove he left behind had grown immensely both in size and value.

However, it remained largely forgotten until, in 1976, the Treasury officer wrote to the state Government that "retention of the boxes for an indefinite period requires proper sanction". Sheikh Abdullah, the then chief minister, asked to see the jewels and two boxes were taken to his cabinet room. But after seeing just three or four items, he said: "Take the boxes back, lest

PHOTO FEATURE



(Clockwise from above) a pearl-embroidered jacket; part of an armlet; exquisitely worked cane and sword hilts; a bracelet; jewel-studded necklaces and an intricately designed brooch

we get tempted."

Expert Evaluation: Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, former director of the state Geology and Mining Department, who was present on the occasion, arranged for evaluation by N.C. Reyner, an expert from the London auction house, Sotheby's. The evaluation was not officially commissioned by the Government, but by a private firm interested in the treasure. Reyner worked for four days from July 22, 1983, under an agreement that he would be paid Rs 1 lakh for his efforts.

After the controversy, however, Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah announced that the state Government would place the treasure in a museum. The firm that had commissioned Reyner lost interest and, not surprisingly, the expert withheld his report until someone had paid his fees. Although fancy figures were bandied about to describe the worth of the jewellery—some of the estimates as high as Rs 1,000 crore informed sources in London said that the collection was "not half as exciting" as the Nizam's collection. Meanwhile, another Sotheby's assessor is scheduled to visit Srinagar next week.

While the museum is still to be built, rival claims to the jewels have been made. Some Sikh bodies and Dr Karan Singh, the son of Maharaja Hari Singh, want a say in the disposal of the jewels. Says Singh: "For myself, I don't claim the treasure but you can't dismiss the fact that the whole of it belonged to my forefathers."

He remembers: "I was a child when I used to see my father wearing some of the now talked about items like the crown, Sar-



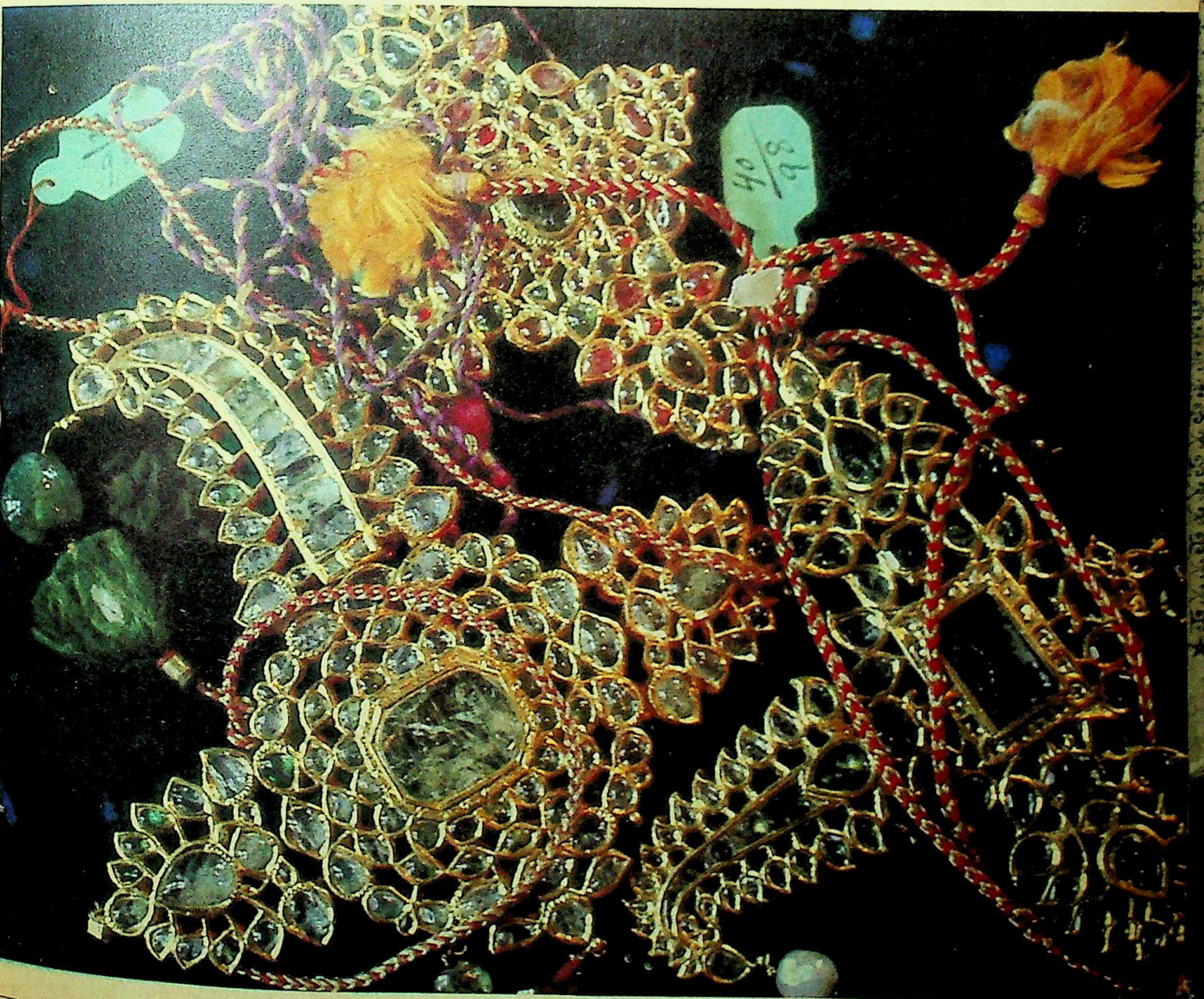
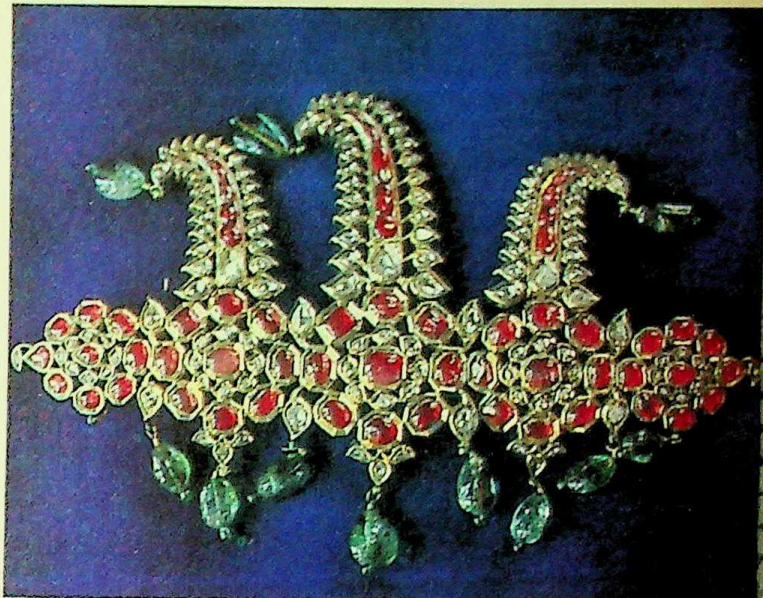
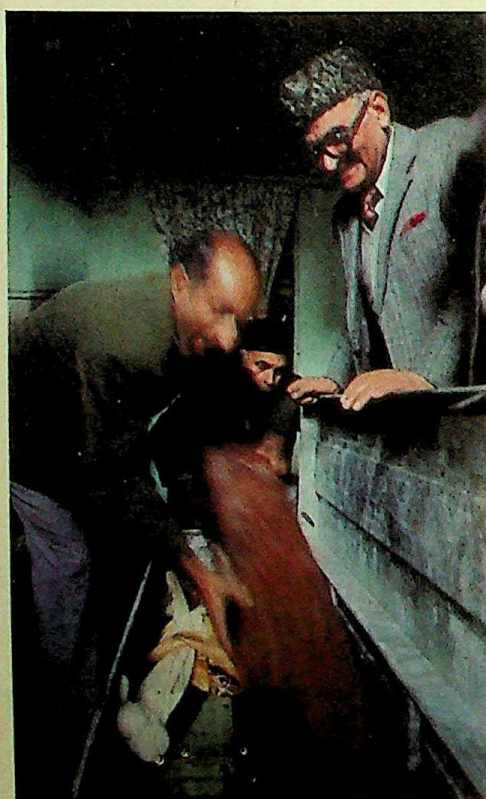


PHOTO FEATURE



(Anti-clockwise from above) a sumptuous choker, section of a bracelet and Iqbal Nath (right) with the treasure.

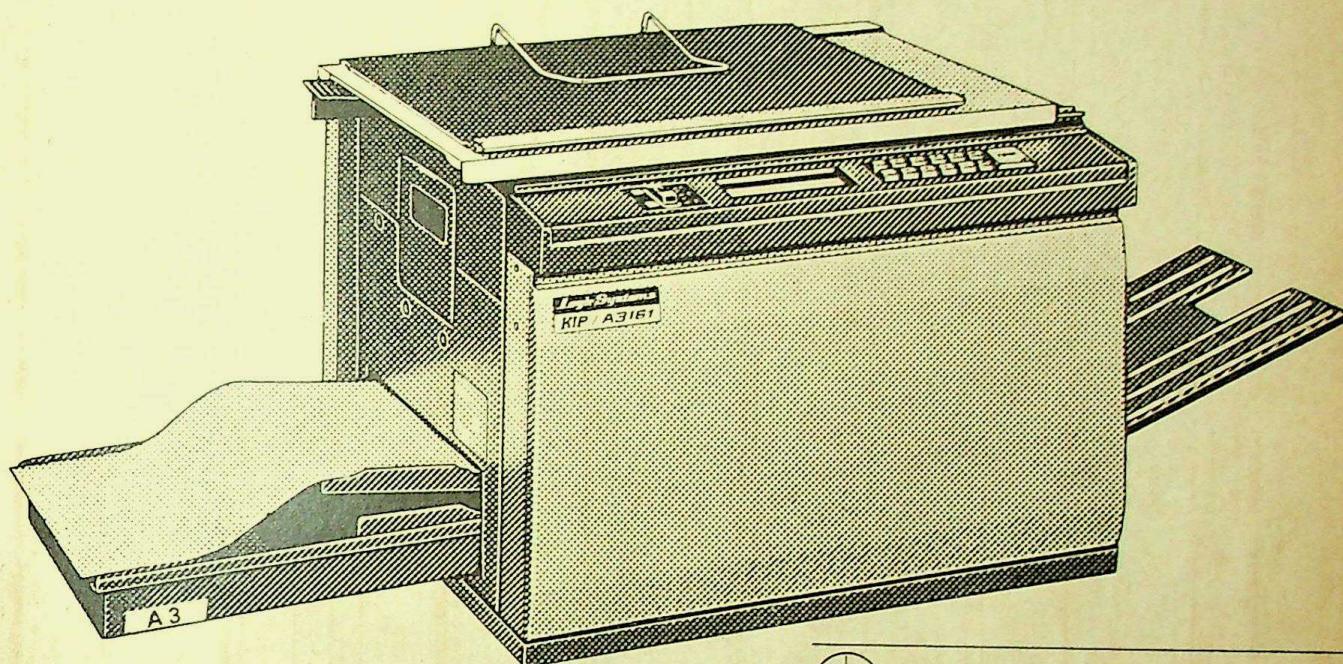
pech, swords, pearl necklaces etc. Particularly on Dussehra, Diwali, Baisakhi and the occasional ceremonies." In emotional tones, he adds: "I don't have a ring for myself but when my children hear about the toys my father has left for the state, they feel quite overwhelmed."

Dr Karan Singh's feelings for the glittering, fairy-tale treasure are understandable. And it is quite likely that the hoard will continue to stimulate emotions for some time to come.

A little more adroit handling would probably have kept the jewellery out of the limelight of controversy. As it is, the affair has acquired an unsavoury taste, and obviously the end of it is not yet in sight. Farooq has tried to set to rest all controversies and claims by announcing that "the treasure belongs neither to my father nor to Karan Singh's father. It belongs to the six million people of the state." It is, undoubtedly, a treasure worth owning.

—GHULAM NABI KHAN

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GLOBE-TROTTING

PIERRE CARDIN

Designs On India

Cardin giving finishing touches to one of his creations: world-wide empire

PIERRE CARDIN at 61 is the undisputed king of the franchising business. His name is not only tacked on to the label of top-ranking *haute couture*, but to anything from fountain pens and pickle jars to private jets. His fame has spread worldwide—his name is sold in 80 countries straddling five continents and in Japan he is the third best known Frenchman after Napoleon and De Gaulle. The Cardin empire's estimated annual sales range between \$400 million to several billion, and his markets include communist China and the Soviet Union. Last

fortnight, Cardin was in Bombay to inaugurate the Man-made Textile Exhibition sponsored by the Rayon Textile Export Promotion Council. And for the celebrated designer, his trip to India wasn't just a courtesy visit. Cardin is here to hold discussions with Indian companies about possible tie-ups and also approach a front-ranking Indian hotel chain about the possibility of opening branches of the famous Maxim's de Paris—arguably the world's best known restaurant, owned by Cardin.

Since 1977, under the Maxim's tag, Cardin has been franchising labels for div-

erse commodities—from sardine tins to table wear and of course clothes. Cardin operations under the Maxim's label is conceived simply. In this system, the manufacturer pays a minimum guarantee for the rights to produce goods under the label. If sales surpass the guarantee, Cardin then receives a percentage of sales. And if Cardin chooses his Indian operations would essentially function along the same lines.

Although Cardin has featured his fashion shows in India thrice before, he didn't till recently, think of investing in this country. But now he seems a little more optimistic and genuinely believes that India has "enormous" potential. Besides starting Maxim's restaurants and launching Cardin boutiques in major cities in India, he has plans to manufacture ready-to-wear clothes made exclusively from Indian materials which he feels could be export-oriented. Says the tall and willowy former Indian model Phyllis Mendes who worked for Cardin and is currently looking after his Indian operations: "The idea is to promote and use purely Indian material—fabrics, jewellery, leather. There shouldn't be any problem with the men's and children's ready-to-wear but we will have to reorient women's wear for the Indian woman. For instance, Cardin will design stylish kurtas and tops with Indian fabrics which could be worn with churidars."

New Openings: Ventures like Maxim's are expected to be operated entirely by Indians with French technical know-how, expertise and quality control. Long range plans include marketing exceptional Indian culinary delights under the Maxim's label worldwide, followed by table wear and home furnishing accessories with Indian motifs. And if all negotiations and plans go smoothly, Pierre Cardin boutiques ought to spring up in Indian cities by the end of 1984 and the celebrated Maxim's restaurant could open both in Bombay and Delhi.

Maxim's—a watering hole for the world's rich and famous with a style and splendour dating from the turn of the century—was acquired by Pierre Cardin in 1981. It was way back in 1893 that two Frenchmen from the Auvergne opened a little cafe at the now famous address, "3, Rue Royale" mainly for cabbies who stationed their carriages around the sprawling Place de la Concorde. The two owners soon lost interest in the cafe but a waiter, Maximilien Gaillard, took over. In a few years, it became the favourite restaurant and night spot for the European aristocracy, bankers and celebrities.

Soon, branches of Maxim's de Paris started opening in the world's big cities. It boasted of a vigorous nightlife and sometimes sprang up in least expected places.

On Sept... spent \$... opening... Chinese... and fun... headed... prices... expected... privilege... of almo...

TH... s... r... family... produce... he expla... to get to... have luc... have be... Schiaparelli... to design... La Bete... Then he...

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On September 26 this year, Cardin, having spent \$2 million, staged an extravagant opening of Maxim's in Beijing as throngs of Chinese ogled, women in dazzling jewellery and fur coats and men in dinner jackets headed for the restaurant. With its daunting prices, at \$100 a head and up, Maxim's is expected to be an occasional treat for even privileged Westerners and beyond the reach of almost all Chinese.

THE BACKGROUND to the Cardin success story is a typical rags-to-riches fairytale. Born in Venice, his family was involved in wines, agriculture produce and transport. "I was born lucky," he explained. "Many people have talent but to get to the top you have to work hard and have lucky breaks too." His lucky breaks have been big ones. He worked with Schiaparelli, then Jean Cocteau invited him to design costumes for his films, *La Belle et La Bête* (Beauty and the Beast) and *Orphee*. Then he met Christian Dior and together

creates coordination between objects thus affecting the entire environment. For Cardin, the lighter, by its form and colour, should express the specific sense of grace within the frame-work of a cigarette package, cigarette, hand, mouth and face.

For those envious of his success, his cardinal sins are many. There is some heavy duty talk of his investments in real estate: his acquisitions are truly startling. In the Faubourg Saint-Honore, one of Paris' most prized districts, Cardin has all but acquired the Elysee presidential palace. Should Francois Mitterrand feel beleaguered by Pierre Cardin, he seems to have sound reasons. To the east, west and south of the palace, Cardin boutiques have cropped up. Interspersed are the various Maxim's salons—delicatessen, Maxim's 'Homme de la Nuit' ('Gentlemen of the Night') boutique, Maxim's fruits and also Maxim's fleurs—a flower shop where art nouveau vases are filled with white orchids at \$40 a stem. There is an avant garde Cardin furniture shop in

outstanding example is his theatre and art gallery complex, "L'Espace Cardin", also situated a few meters off the Elysee Palace which he bought for \$30 million and operated at a loss for a long time sponsoring resolutely avant garde shows by unknown artistes, alongside popular ones. Those who have performed here have included Kathak dancers from Kerala and muscular bodied drummers from Japan and forthcoming ones like Russian rock operas to popular stars like Renata Tebaldi, Marlene Dietrich, Ella Fitzgerald and Shirley Bassey.

Relaxing at a stylish little restaurant at the "Theatre Espace Cardin", Cardin told INDIA TODAY: "People think ventures like Maxim's are outright capitalist symbols because of its price range. But look at the employment it generates. In this restaurant just two waiters serve several tables. At Maxim's, I have two people for each table. I think I am a better socialist than many professed ones. My ventures are not simply profit-oriented. I create jobs and I say that



Mendes (left) in Cardin *couture* and the designer with Maxim's Beijing staff: going East

they created the long black skirt and fitted jacket which became known as the "New Look". That was in 1947. Since then he has been a rivetting trend-setter.

Meticulous Stylist: Today top-drawer designers like Givenchy and St Laurent, Montana and Castelbajac in Paris, Armani and Versace in Italy and Japanese designers like Miyake, Hanae Mori and Kenzo might have more fashionable appeal but Cardin says he is aware of the criticism of him rather as a stylist than a designer. But he points out that this argument has been going on in Europe since the early '20s. He claims he

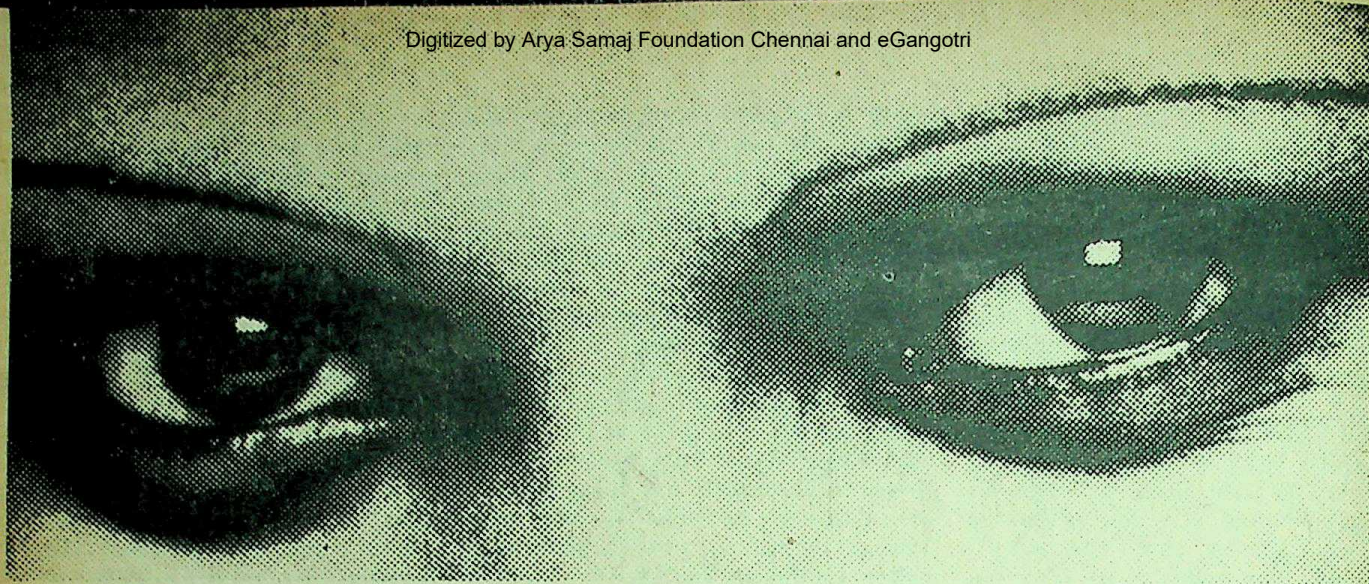
this area where a constant throng stare fascinated. A typical example is an outside pouffe made of leather where a backrest springs up at the touch of a button. It required shells from 36 turtles to design it. And it is priced around 60,000 francs (Rs 8 lakh) and there is a delivery delay of a year. Apparently turtles just don't breed fast enough. A workaholic, Cardin is known to detest holidays and for diversion, shifts furniture.

Cardin has always maintained he does not launch ventures just to make money but to make things better than they are. One

real socialism. I don't make money just to have money. I see myself as a socialist who works for society".

For a man who wants to swathe the world with his creations, he seems to be the crest of an unstoppable successful career. He keeps on advancing casting aside iron and bamboo curtains, grimly determined to eradicate bad taste. If even the Russians and the Chinese seem prepared to be scarved, perfumed, shod, chocolate and bedded in Cardin's creations and designs, then what not, 700 million potential customers in India?

—RAMESH CHANDRAN in Paris



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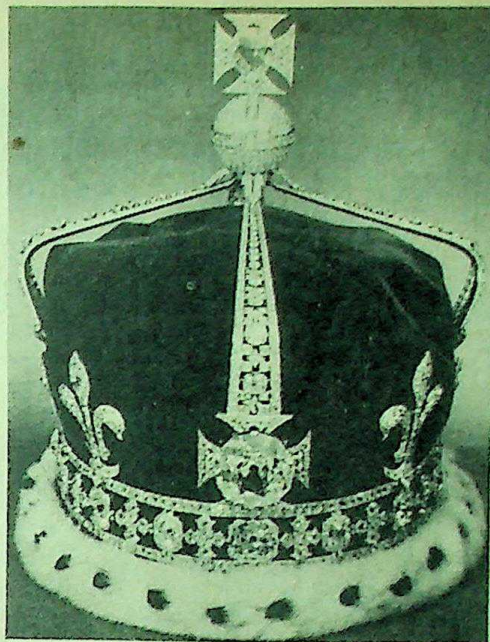
UNITED KINGDOM

A Diamond Is Forever

LORD Dalhousie called it a "sort of emblem of historical conquest in India". For over 300 years, the exquisite diamond Koh-i-noor—mountain of light—changed hands, a captive in a trail of pillage and conquest that led from India to Afghanistan and back. But for the past 140 years or so it has resided in Britain's Tower of London dazzling tourists and local citizens alike. Last month, the nearly 110-carat diamond became the object of dispute again as India made an unofficial claim for it, following a meeting of the education ministers of non-aligned countries in South Korea. The members said the restitution of cultural properties to the home countries should not be delayed, citing an existing UNESCO resolution to back their claim.

Originally a stupendous 793 carats, the diamond is believed to have been mined in Hyderabad. In 1793 it was taken during the sack of Delhi by the Afghan conqueror Nadir Shah from the then ruler, Mohammed Shah. A British historian chronicles the story of how Mohammed Shah hid the diamond, but later unable to resist the temptation to show off, wore it on his turban. A canny Nadir Shah then shrewdly suggested that the two rulers exchange turbans. The Koh-i-noor thus moved to Afghanistan. When Nadir Shah was murdered, his bodyguard Ahmed Khan took away the diamond along with other valuables—and according to historian Olaf Caroe, Ahmed Khan was able to found his kingdom in Afghanistan on this wealth. Fleeing from his Kingdom in 1838, Shah Shuja took refuge with Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. Ranjit Singh extracted the diamond as payment for giving him sanctuary, and it remained in Punjab till the East India Company annexed Punjab in 1849 under the pretext of misrule.

British Possession: In the annexation treaty, Henry Eliot, secretary to the British Government of India, made a specific mention of the "gem called Koh-i-noor which was taken from Shah Sooja-ool-mulk by Maharajah Runjit Singh (and which) shall be surrendered by the Maharajah of Lahore to the Queen of England". But subsequently, the British seemed a little careless about the fabled gem. The story goes that Sir Henry Lawrence, then Governor-General of India, casually put the diamond in his



The crown inset with the Koh-i-noor: keepsake of the Raj

trouser pocket and then forgetfully sent his trousers to the dhobi. Luckily for the British royal family a faithful servant returned it to his master. The diamond was then cut and polished and cut again, in the process getting whittled down to its present comparatively small size of 109.9 carats. It takes central position in Queen Mother's crown, and has never been worn by any reigning monarch.



King George VI and Queen Elizabeth wearing her crown at the coronation: disputed gem

The question of returning the diamond to the subcontinent is a sensitive subject for the British Government. In 1976, prime minister Bhutto of Pakistan sent a personal letter to the then British prime minister James Callaghan asking for the Koh-i-noor to be returned to Pakistan. Callaghan wrote in reply that he could not recommend to the Queen that it should be handed over to Pakistan. But he promised that it would not be returned to any other country either.

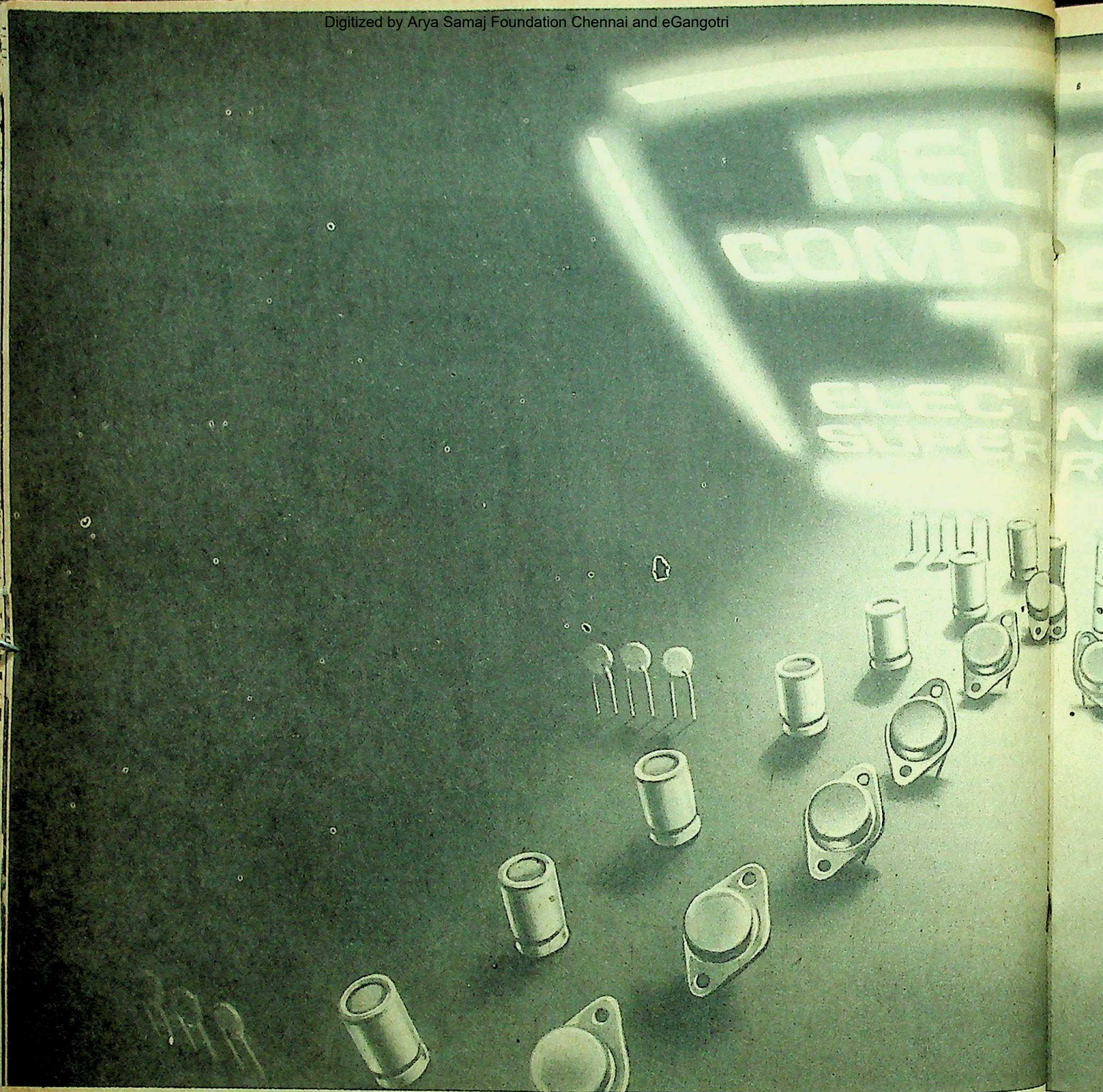
Delicate Situation: The British Government is treading carefully at the moment because of the controversy with regard to the return of the Elgin Marble sculptures to Greece. Inspired by the Greek Minister for Culture, actress Melina Mercouri, the Greek Government in October formally requested the British to return the marble frieze. There is much sympathy in Britain for the Greek Government's request, but museum officials and members of the Government are worried that giving in to the Greek request would lead to other countries demanding the return of their art objects.

The official Government view with regard to the Koh-i-noor is that the history of the diamond is confused. "How do we know that we are talking about the same diamond that was supposed to have been mined in Hyderabad?" asked an official of the Indian department at the Victoria and Albert museum, which among other Indian artefacts, displays Ranjit Singh's gold throne. "The Koh-i-noor is not an art object, it is a mineral," argued the same official, "how can any government ask for the return of a mineral?"

Unofficial Move: A spokesman for Lord Gowrie, the minister for the arts said soothingly: "We have not received any formal request from the Government of India regarding the diamond, and besides it is a part of the Queen's property, so we are unable to comment." When contacted earlier for information regarding art objects from India in the Queen's collection, officials of the Buckingham Palace Queen's Gallery said sharply "Why should we tell you? You will only put in a claim for it."

Strangely, India has never in the past officially expressed interest in the return of the diamond or the many other such historical antiques and treasure which lie in British museums, although former chief minister of Maharashtra A.R. Antulay did make an aborted bid to bring back Chhatrapati Shivaji's Bhawani Sword. However, if newspaper reports which followed the South Korean meeting are any indication, New Delhi might well have changed its policy on artefacts that adorn museums all over the world.

—BONNY MUKHERJEE in London



Big industrial buyers need supermarket facilities

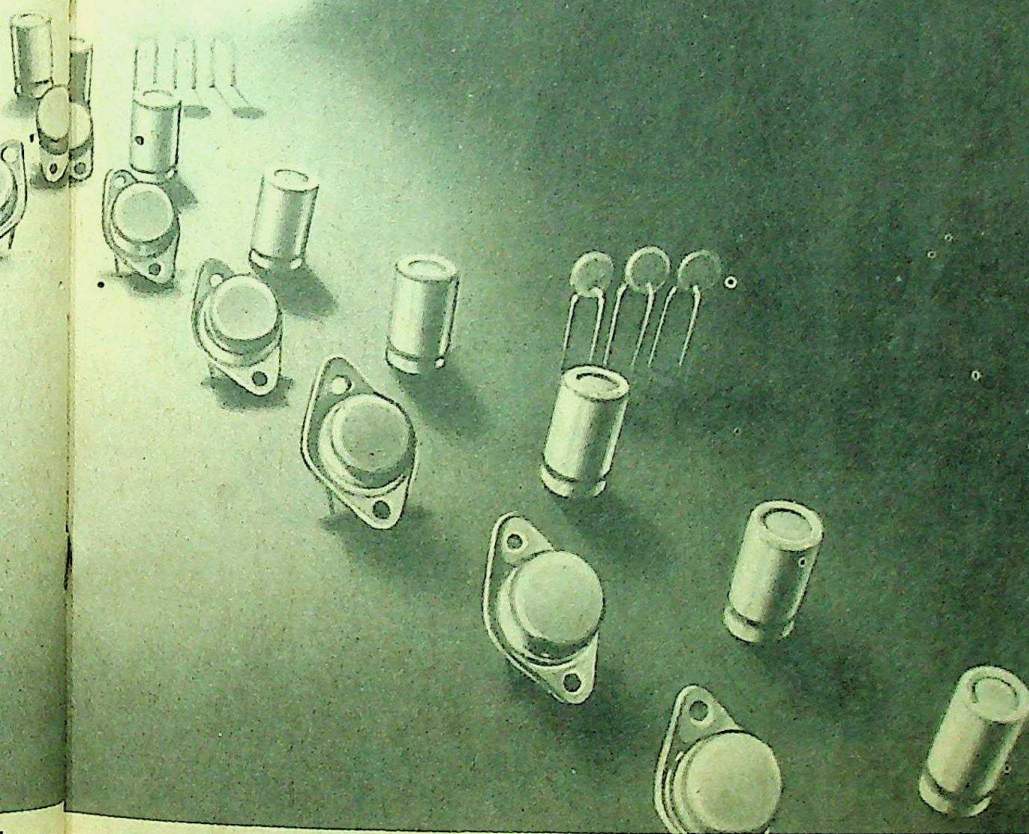
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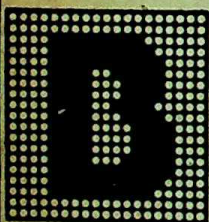
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SUPER POWERS

Exchanges Of Convenience



SUGGESTIONS on how to "punish" the Soviet Union are continuing to pour out a mile a minute in the aftermath of the macabre downing of the Korean civilian jetliner by a Russian fighter aircraft. Relations between the two superpowers are at a dangerous stalemate. Americans at all ends of the political spectrum are recommending wide varieties of sanctions against the Soviets. They range from cutting off wheat shipments, to breaking off relations, to ending all technology exchanges with Warsaw Pact countries.

But, it seems, the more things change the more they remain the same. Similar protests erupted in America following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981. Declaration of war being a futile game in the nuclear age the alternatives available to American planners were trade and technology embargoes. The Soviets, Americans hoped, would be brought to their knees and into compliance with civilised international conduct by choking off the life-giving and economically sustaining bounties of western food and western progress.

◀ The tactic failed repeatedly because NATO countries refused to cooperate with the US; because American wheat farmers threatened domestic political mayhem when faced with the prospect of not being able to sell their surpluses at profitable rates to the USSR, and because the Soviet economy has shown a resilience that will not crack under the weight of technology embargoes from the West.

Greater Benefits: During the last few weeks a flurry of reports from the US Government have made it embarrassingly clear that in several key areas, the Americans have gained far more from science and technology exchanges with the Soviet Union, than the Soviets have gained from the Americans. As a result, some members of Congress are cautioning the Reagan Administration not to scuttle the specialised agreements with the Soviet Union under which the two countries regularly exchange and share ideas and technologies in oceanography, medicine and public health, artificial heart research and development, environmental protection and agriculture. Ending these cooperative ventures would not only increase further East-West tensions but also result in a new loss to Uncle Sam of new scientific methods and technologies available from the Soviet Union.

These cooperative exchanges between the two superpowers go back to 1958. They were renewed and increased during the 1972 and 1974 summits in Moscow and the 1973 summit in Washington. But because of the greatly reduced funding levels for these programmes in the wake of Afghanistan and Poland, the level of cooperative science and technology activity under eight remaining agreements has

declined to about 20 per cent of the 1979 level, when 11 agreements were in force.

Recent studies submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee belie the perception that there is a one-way flow of benefits to the Soviet Union. One report identifies six programmes under four agreements "where the US tended to benefit more," Senate source said. Adding, that in three programmes under one agreement the Soviet side seemed to benefit more, and in the remaining programmes benefits were assessed as roughly equal. Confidential government reports indicate the following areas in which the Americans have gained more from the Soviets rather than the other way around during science and technology exchanges.

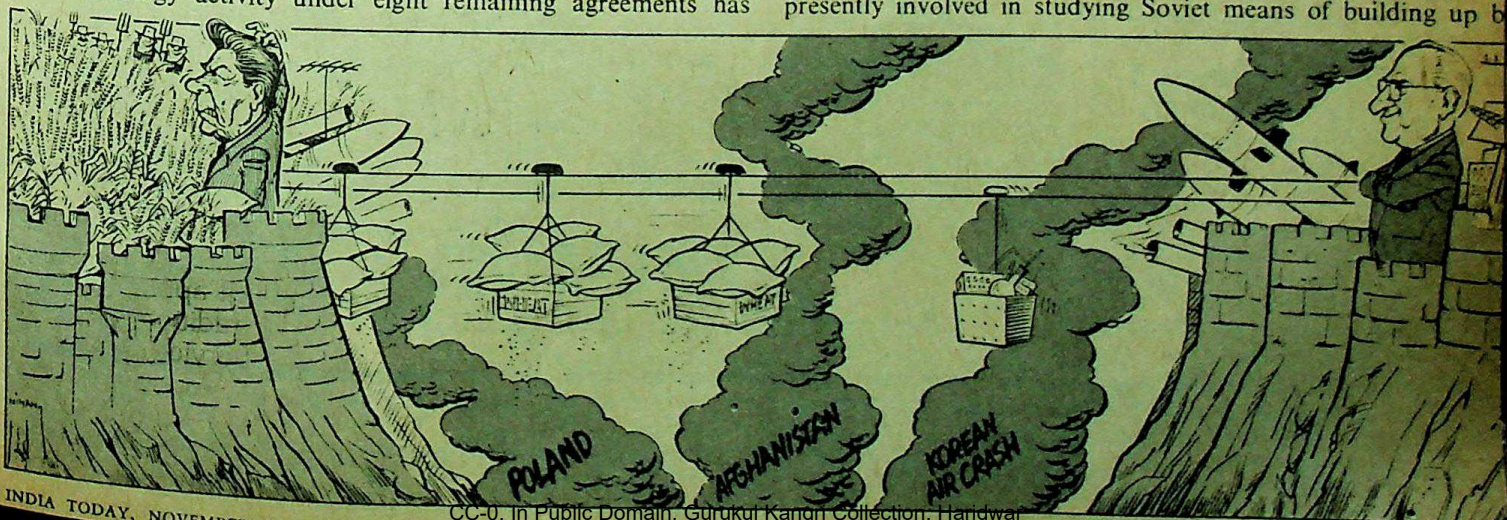
► **Environment:** In November 1981, the Administration on the advice of the State Department and National Security Council decided to extend the US-USSR environmental agreement for another five-year period. US officials admitted that joint research and studies published on the basis of that research trail-blazed scientific knowledge.

American specialists have been given access to regions of the USSR rarely visited by westerners as well as to sectors of the Soviet scientific and bureaucratic elite professionally committed to environmental goals. The major gains to the US through such contacts have been in the fields of nature conservation, climatic effects, and earthquake prediction.

► **Scientific Research:** This covered a number of areas that benefited the US. In the field of applying computers to management American participants were impressed with the Soviet's "theoretical aspects of numerical modelling, and Soviet attempts to apply such models to large-scale economic planning." In addition, American researchers were able to obtain 'excellent' mathematical modelling data on the electroslog re-melting process—a field pioneered by the Soviet Union—which had long been sought by the US side. At both sides benefited equally in sharing experiments in electron beam evaporation and on cryogenic material and welds.

Undoubtedly among the best examples of the benefits of well-matched and carefully designed international scientific cooperation, one report says, was in the area of physics. In every project area, particularly in the study of dense plasmas, quantum dynamics, and reactivity of large molecules—the activities have resulted in significant achievement advancing US scientific understanding.

► **Forestry:** Using methods acquired in the Soviet Union, American scientists have introduced insect parasites and predators that may be able to control the destructive Gypsy Moth that plagues havoc with America's 'hardwood' forests. And US scientists are presently involved in studying Soviet means of building up b



populations for natural control of insects.

► **Space Research:** After an initial surge in the 1970s US-Soviet bilateral space research programmes began a sharp decline. Among the sanctions announced by the Reagan Administration in response to Soviet actions in Poland, was the decision to kill the US-USSR space agreement of 1972. The programme died last May. The value of information exchanged between the two countries under this programme in 1982—shortly before its demise—clearly favoured the United States.

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): "For the first five months of 1982 in which US-USSR exchange activities took place, the overall value of the scientific and technical information clearly favoured the US. For example, visits to the Soviet Union clearly benefited the US scientific community involved with planetary exploration, especially since these visits coincided with receipt of data and results during and after the March Soviet Venus Lander missions. No comparable US flow of information to the Soviets was possible in 1982, since the US had no Venus mission of its own during this period." At present there are no US plans to launch another American spacecraft to Earth's sister planet before 1988.

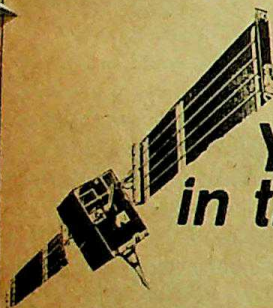
► **Bio-medicines:** In the bio-medical area, the US continued to receive raw data of Soviet computer-assisted tomography (CAT)-scans of cosmonaut crews involved in long-duration manned space flights for subsequent processing and reduction. Such data are unique by-products of the current short-duration focus of US manned spaceflight programmes using the space shuttle.

The Soviet CAT-scans were taken of cosmonaut vertebrae, to assess the effects of an extended period of weightlessness on overall

bone development processes. The scans were made on US-provided magnetic tapes and the raw data was shipped to the United States for further analysis and information. Because of the demise of the space agreements the US will now be unable to share the fruits of what had earlier been planned as another joint programme—the 'Cosmos' biosatellite programme that would have sent primates into space on Soviet spaceships for planned cardiovascular and biorhythmic measurements.

► **Ocean Studies:** This bilateral agreement, expected to continue until 1984, has already benefited the US in several areas including large-scale air-sea interaction, ocean dynamics, marine geology and geophysics, and biological productivity and biochemistry. The large-scale air-sea interaction programme—a major area of experimentation—was conducted with 13 US scientists, and the equipment carried to Antarctica aboard a large Soviet polar research vessel—the *Somov*.

A recent Senate report has recommended that scientific and technical agreements which have been allowed to languish or expire be given more attention and restored to a full level of cooperative activity. The report adds: "Any notion of a 'one-way street' (favouring the Soviets) in such agreements has not only been disproven but is also largely inappropriate in many areas. Just as the Soviet consumer and the American farmer both benefit from agricultural commerce, so too can both nations continue to gain from the remarkably broad array of cooperative scientific activities they began in the 1970s. It is indeed not only self-defeating but a failure of world responsibility to forgo the humanitarian and ecological achievements that can emanate from scientific and technical cooperation between the two superpowers."



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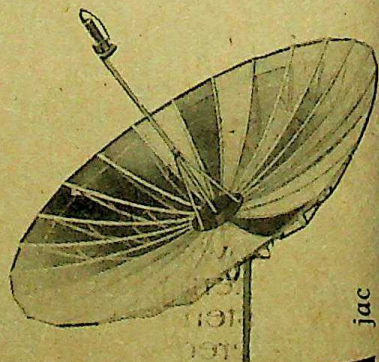
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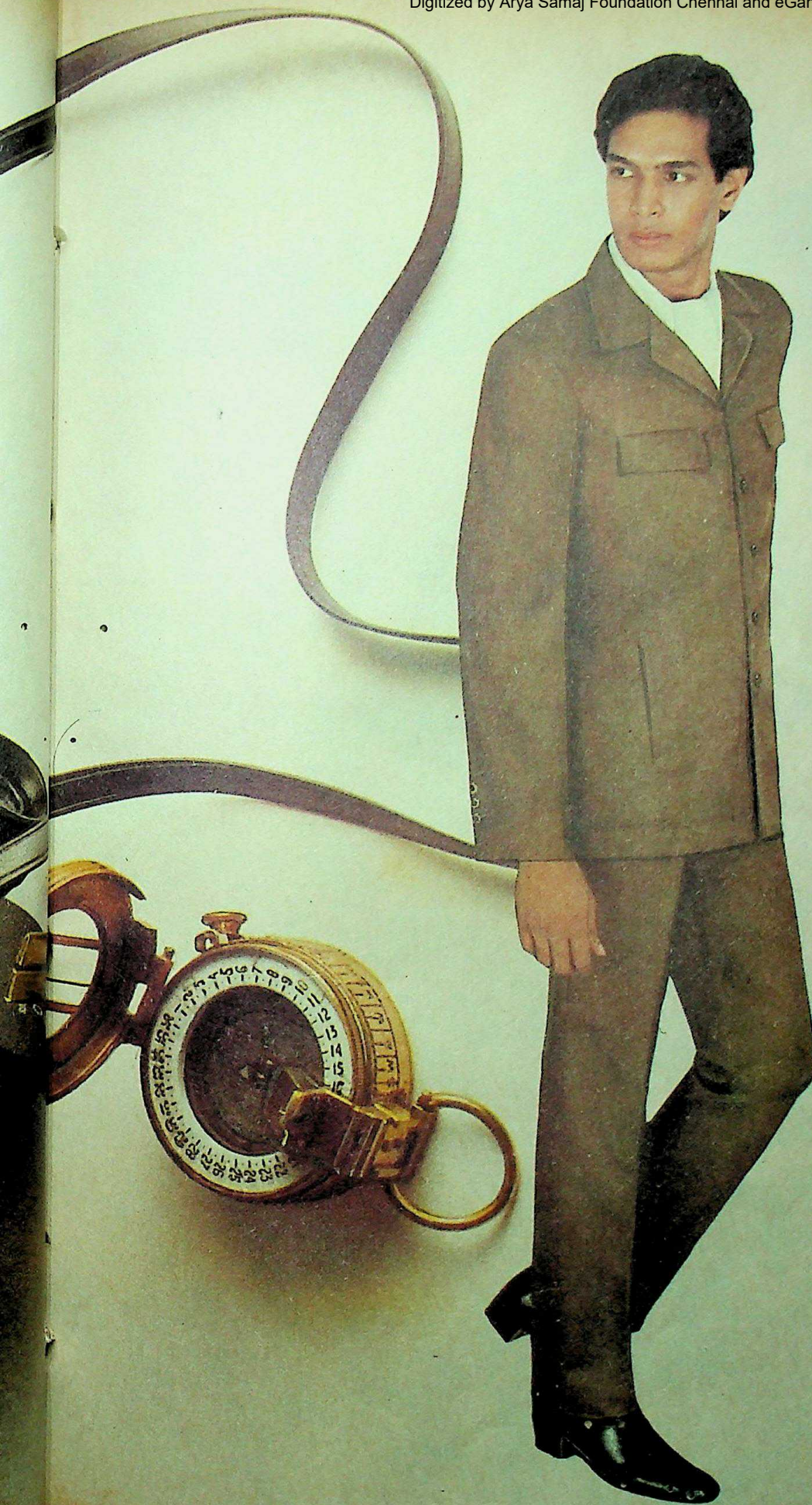
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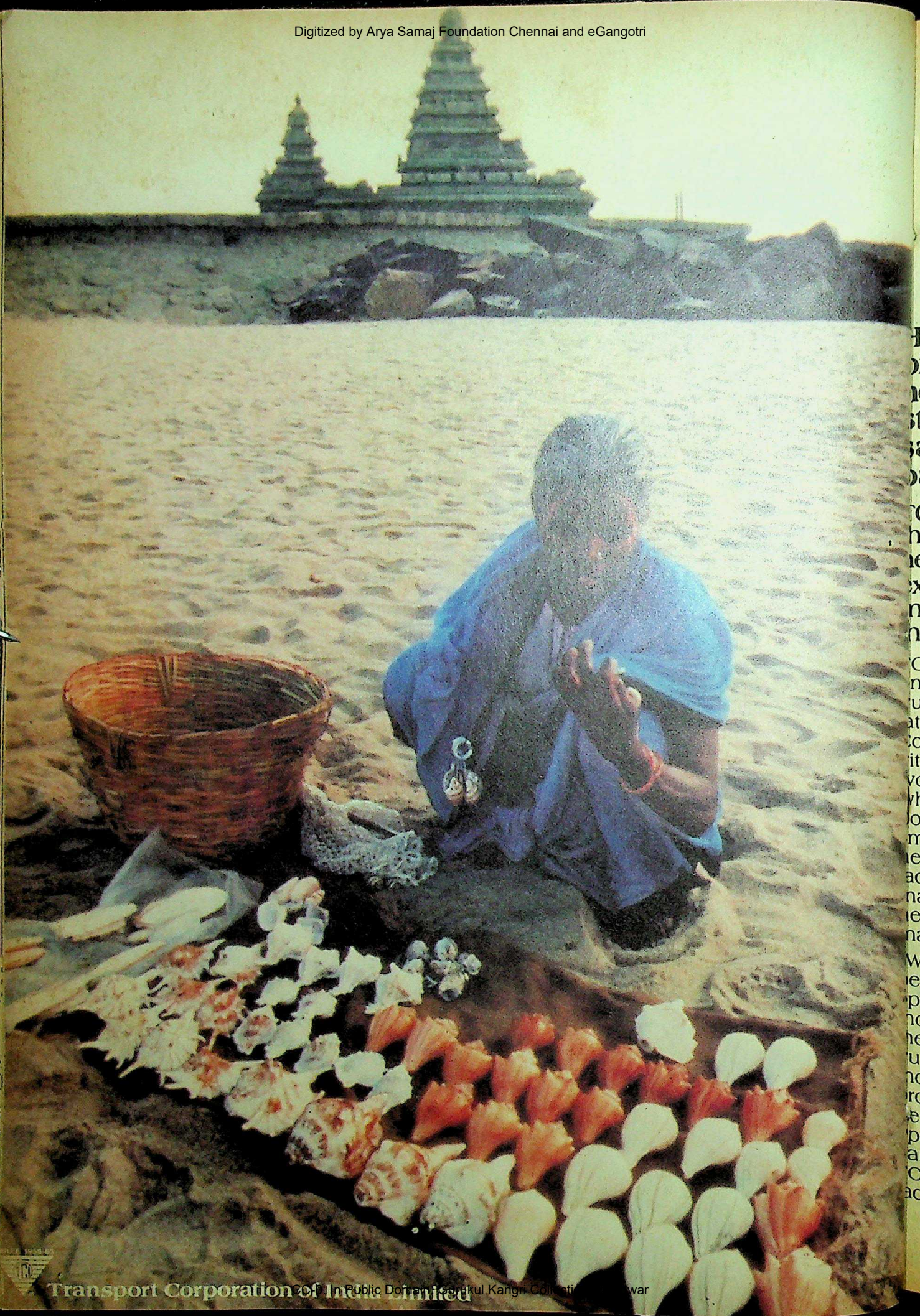
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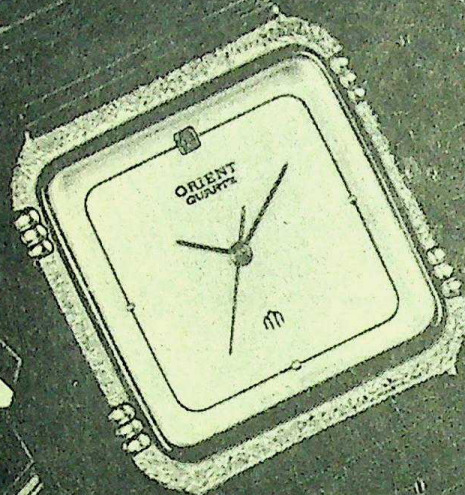
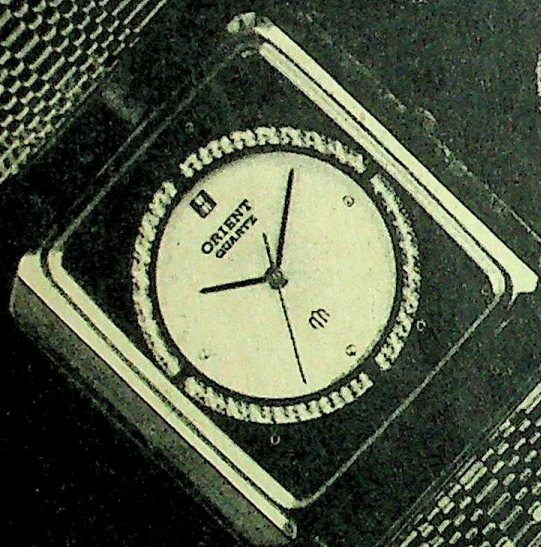
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Jayewardene (left) and Tamils in a Sri Lankan refugee camp: uneasy truce

SRI LANKA

Degrees Of Friendship



THE aftermath of the bloody ethnic violence in Sri Lanka has been an uneasy truce, with

the Tamil problem far from resolved. Even though President Jayewardene has not reacted to India's offer to assist in bringing about a settlement, India's role in the island crisis still remains the subject of an intense debate in Sri Lanka in which both opinion leaders and policy makers are involved.

Can India help defuse the ethnic tensions as a prelude to a political settlement of the vexed Tamil question? If it can, then should such a role be accorded some formal recognition rather than tacit or grudging acceptance? And if India intervenes, what form will it take—overt or undercover; friendly persuasion, diplomatic and political pressure or will it be the 'hard option'? While the last question is confined to a narrower segment of the island's elite—a new breed of military 'analysts',—their emergence itself indicates how profoundly the crisis has affected a notoriously insular country.

After easing out a rebellious radical faction from her crisis-ridden Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), Mrs Bandaranaike voiced her opinion about India's role in an interview with *The Island's* Sunday edition before leaving the country for medical treatment in Yugoslavia. Defining India as an "intermediary", Bandaranaike said India's limited role was confined to helping the country in removing the current Sinhalese-Tamil impasse which had resulted from the Government and the Tamil United Libera-

tion Front's (TULF) refusal to speak to each other because of the former's 'non-negotiable pre-condition'. The ruling United National Party (UNP) insisted that the TULF should publicly renounce separatism before talks are held. Bandaranaike who was bold enough to say that such a pre-condition was unrealistic if the Government was seriously interested in negotiation, is already under attack from UNP spokesmen.

Deft Answers: In its front page lead story under the banner headline "What Role Can India Play?" *The Island* was smart enough to juxtapose its Bandaranaike interview with many excerpts from the first exclusive interview given by President Jayewardene's special envoy to India, his brother, Hector Jayewardene. Answering questions on his extraordinary diplomatic mission (a nine-nation tour which included India, China, Japan along with the ASEAN five) Jayewardene told *The Lanka Guardian*: "Mrs Gandhi had offered her good offices to assist in bringing about a settlement. It was not 'mediation' as asserted in certain quarters but more correctly an offer to assist in breaking the deadlock."

politics and economics referred to in your question may determine the degree of friendship. This however does not affect non-alignment for friendship in whatever degree is not the same as alignment. Agreements as regards foreign assistance, particularly military assistance, would constitute departure from a policy of non-alignment.

Shuttle Diplomacy: Just as much as this deftly worded answer may come as a happy surprise to those in Delhi and Madras who raised a hue and cry over US Defence Secretary, Casper Weinberger's whistle-stop in Colombo, it will disappoint Colombo advocates of the 'American option' who are cheerfully placing all their eggs (and Trince malee) in the Weinberger basket.

However, a loose agreement by these different parties could enable the UNP to present a "Sinhala consensus" as a response to "common strategy" by the two main Tamil communities, represented by the TULF and the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC). Thondaman of the CWC, although a Cabinet minister, has already joined the TULF leader in a "shuttle diplomacy" that connects Colombo, Madras and Delhi.

This "in-gathering" in the shadow of the Tamil Nadu umbrella is a particularly unpleasant image because it wrecks a comforting Sinhala assumption that the indigenous Tamils of the north and the Indian Tamil workers in the central hills have different problems and thus little in common. Thondaman, now involved in a furious exchange with Lands Minister Gamini Dissanayake over plantation refugees and "settlers" is a key figure specially after Mrs Gandhi's explicit statement that India will not accept refugees. The new school of armchair strategists however wonder whether their "Cyprus scenario" could become another Bangladesh.

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo

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BEEDI WORKERS

In The Twilight Zone

SIX-YEAR-OLD Shahid is dragged out of bed every morning by his ageing father, Mohammad Ishaque, 55. A quick cup of tea with the leftover rotis of the previous evening, and then a mad rush to the beedi factory. With his sieve, scissors and mat, he works from eight to six, with a brief break for lunch. At the end of the day he collects Rs 2 for his labour. Says Ishaque: "He started working when he was only four years old but the contractor still considers him a learner. If he does not work, he will not eat."

Harsh, but true. The village is Karah in Bihar, situated in the foothills of Rajgir in Nalanda district. Shahid and Mohammad Ishaque are not alone. Ghazala, 10, wakes up at dawn. After *namaz* and helping her mother with the household chores, she queues up at the nearby godown to collect her allotment of kendu leaves and *sukha* (dust tobacco). Her wages at the end of the day are a paltry Rs 4.25, far less than a male worker gets for rolling a thousand beedies. Lal Mohammad, 60, retired eight years ago. By then he had developed breathing trouble, severe backache, and the lumbrical muscles of both hands atrophied. With tears in his eyes, he said: "All have the same fate. They will soon be crippled and starve like me." Today, his diminishing eyesight has led to an absolute dependence on other family members, who too roll beedies to add to the family income.

Dr R. Isri, a leading medical practitioner and the head of the Beedi Mazdoor Union, said: "Imagine the plight of the workers. They are stuffed into ghost-houses which have neither ventilation nor living conditions. They are half-fed and ill-clad. We are ashamed of the situation." In a recently concluded survey on beedi workers, Isri found 90 per cent of the workers suffering from respiratory or lung trouble. Tobacco dust, drawn straight into the lungs causes silicosis, which invariably leads to TB.

Unbelievable Conditions: His recommendation to provide masks to the workers at government expense failed to evoke any response, and the contractors themselves show no interest in his suggestions. In Nalanda district alone, 45,000 workers, including women and children, are crammed into the 'godowns'—abandoned houses, urban shanties and dark dingy holes surrounded by dirty nullahs. The beedi tycoons themselves sit in air-conditioned offices in either Calcutta or Allahabad, operating mainly through contractors and subcon-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PRAMOD PUSKARNA



In Nalanda district alone, 45,000 workers including women and children are crammed into 'godowns'—abandoned houses, urban shanties and dark dingy holes surrounded by dirty nullahs.

tractors. One of the country's oldest industries, over 300 million beedies are produced annually. A thousand beedies fetch anything between Rs 18 and Rs 24 for the manufacturers, and daily turnovers alone run into lakhs.

If working conditions are poor, wages are no better. Karah village alone produces a million beedies in a day. The 3,000 villagers are almost all beedi rollers. Forty years ago, the village was known for handloom production, but today, according to Arshad Imam: "None of us have land or any other means of livelihood, so everybody, men, women and children eke out a living by rolling beedies for the contractors." The wages themselves differ from person to person. Men take home Rs 7.60 for rolling a thousand beedies, while women receive Rs 4.25 for the same amount of labour. Despite Article 24 of the Indian Constitution, which bans child labour, contractors rely heavily on them, paying either nothing or a paltry Rs 2 for a day's work, under the pretext that they are 'learners'.

Since no one can roll more than a thousand beedies in a day, even the two rupees are a major boost to a family's income. Recalls Madar Bux, 72, who retired four years ago: "When I started making beedies some 55 years ago, the rate was 10 annas for a thousand. We were then happy but today an individual who earns Rs 7 per day cannot have two square meals for himself." Also, the meagre wages leave no scope for paying medical bills. In Karah, 50 people suffer from chronic tuberculosis and 80 per cent in the age group of 35-40 suffer from severe back ailments and breathing problems. "No worker can work for more than 15 years without being crippled. At 40, you look 70," adds Mohammad Lal.

Indifferent Authorities: The agony of the workers is not restricted to Nalanda district: it is one of the 13 beedi worker-dominated districts in Bihar. There are, in all of India, 5 million workers. The workers seem resigned to their fate, after an agitation in 1949 when police shot dead Mansoor, a CPI leader. Despite a two-year strike in 1951, the situation remained dormant. Though individuals like Sami Ahmed tried to break away from the grip of contractors by starting their own units, lack of help from the Bihar Government frustrated them. Said Ahmed: "I tried to provide relief to my co-workers by starting a cooperative. Despite applying to the Bihar Government in 1974, we got it done only last year."

Though most political parties have set up beedi workers' unions in the state, it was left to S.K. Lal, a Nalanda district magistrate, to take up their cause. Lal ordered the



Despite Article 24 of the Indian Constitution, which bans child labour, contractors rely heavily on them, paying either nothing or a paltry Rs 2 for a day's work, under the pretext that they are 'learners'.



local Labour Department officials conduct a census of the workers and a survey of their living conditions. Over 20,000 workers were below 14 years in age. Workers were being paid Rs 3.50 to Rs 4.40 for a thousand beedies as against the stipulated 6.65. Unable to take action against manufacturers because their headquarters were situated outside the district, Lal sent a strongly worded letter to the labour commissioner which warned of "serious developments" if the Government failed to help the beedi workers.

LAL'S letter had immediate effects. The labour commissioner called a state-level meeting and new wages at the rate of Rs 10.60 per thousand was fixed. The employers agreed only to Rs 8, but even this decision wasn't implemented. Despite these efforts, the situation remains as it was. He: "Since they are born as human beings, they are called humans, otherwise they would be worse off than animals." Yet in other districts the situation is worse. In Pakur (Sahibganj Parganas), wages are below Rs 4 per 1,000 while in Chakradharpur, Bandgaon, Sonua and other districts the workers can get no wages, tables and rations from certain shops. Usually, shopkeepers are in collusion with the contractors to supply rotten or substandard material.

Though various schemes and acts have been drawn up by the Government to improve the lot of beedi workers, the schemes have rarely been implemented. A few months before the ouster of former chief minister Jagannath, he had announced some—minimum wages at the rate of Rs 8.65 per 1,000; scholarships for children at Rs 50 per month; and the construction of a 20-bed hospital. He had promised to open a beedi workers' welfare commissioner's office at Patna under the Union Labour Ministry. According to S.M.S. Haque, welfare administrator in Allahabad, the Centre has now decided to open such offices in each state.

But in true bureaucratic style, the welfare offices for beedi workers failed to achieve their purpose. Set up to implement a series of laws passed by Parliament in 1966, the act was helpless for the act was confined to working conditions in industrial premises. Though called the Beedi & Cigar Workers' (Condition of Employment) Act, it failed to take into consideration the fact that no employer used 'industrial premises'.

The Beedi Workers' Welfare Fund Act, 1976 also had hardly any positive effect. Brought into force in February 1977, these acts aimed at creating funds for

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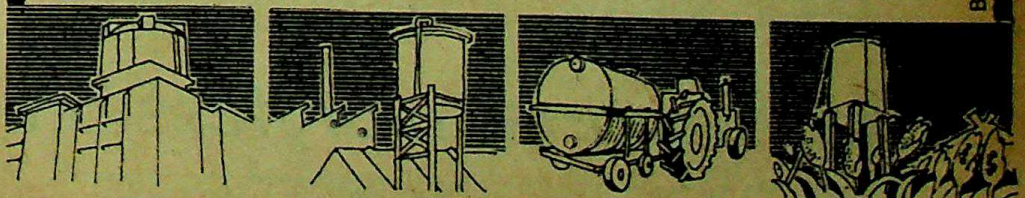
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officials and a sum of Rs 4,00,000 for the welfare of workers. The Janata government continued the collection of cess for welfare. Finally, the Welfare Cess (Amendment) Act of 1981 was implemented to finance the setting up of static-cum-mobile medical units, reservation of beds in TB hospitals for workers, housing schemes, award of scholarships and recreation facilities. According to Haque, there are already eight medical units functioning in Uttar Pradesh and 11 in Bihar, besides which the Government is providing scholarships to 1,857 students: an expenditure of Rs 5.2 lakh by itself.

Resistance: Though the Government seems to be taking some positive steps, the situation is more or less unchanged. The problem is the employers' unwillingness to follow the new rules by splitting up units into smaller ones, often asking workers to do their work at home.

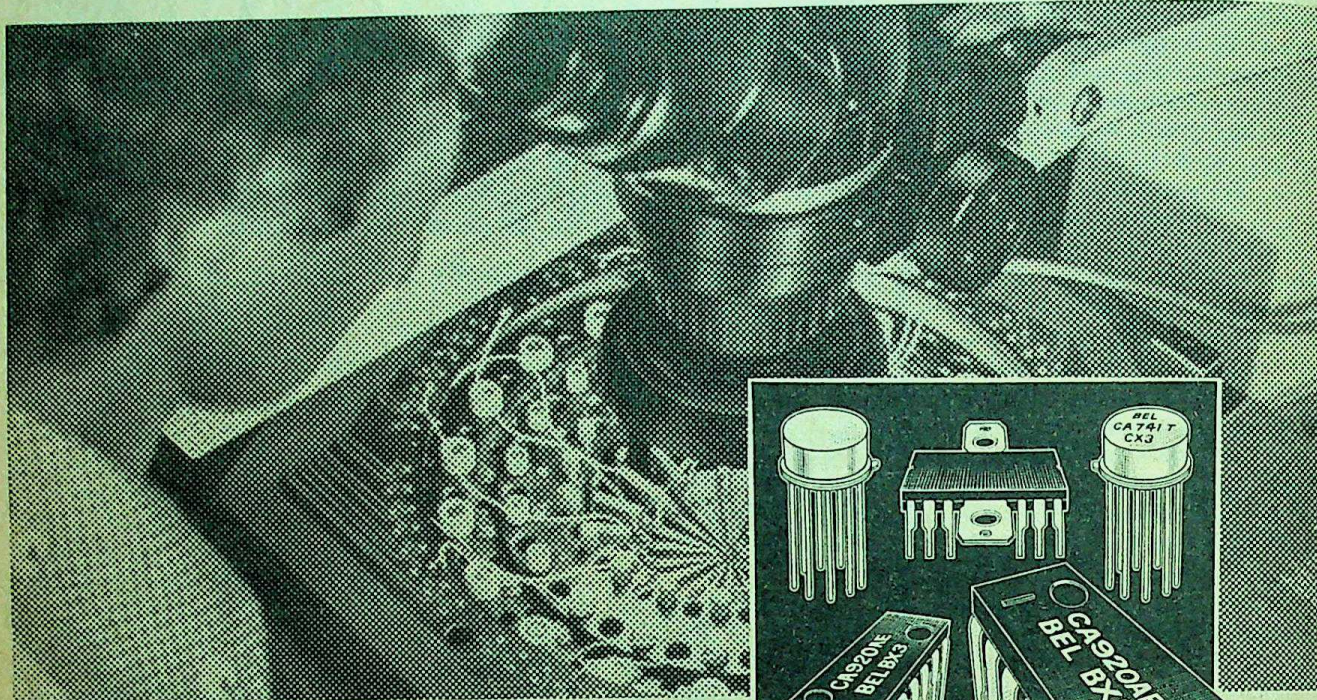
However, last month, Union Minister for Labour, Dharam Vir, told Central Advisory Committee for Beedi Worker's Welfare Fund that so far 674,918 identity cards had been issued to workers to enable them to receive treatment at hospitals run by the organisation. He did not admit that the coverage was by and large "poor" and progress of the scheme was "satisfactory" in Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Explaining the situation, the welfare commissioner's office said that employers were reluctant to issue identity cards to more than 20 workers, for whom they would come under the Factories Act.

The reluctance of the state governments to implement various schemes is understandable. A direct confrontation with the beedi employers would mean that the employers could wind up their business and shift to other areas outside the state. In 1968, when Kerala Government tried to enforce the Beedi & Cigar Workers (Condition of Employment) Act of 1966, the manufacturing closed down operations.

According to G.K. Panikar, chairman of the Kerala Cooperative Society and adviser to the Labour Ministry, for beedi workers, the solution lies in the formation of cooperative societies in different areas. Citing Kerala as an example, where cooperative replaced the old contract system, some members of the Advisory Committee for Beedi Workers suggest that at least 10 per cent of the workers should be employed under the cooperative system. They estimate the expenditure of Rs 17.5 crore to achieve this would be justified. Meanwhile, for six-year-old Shahid and thousands like him, life continues to burn like the cheap beedies they produce—day after day. —FARZAND AHMED

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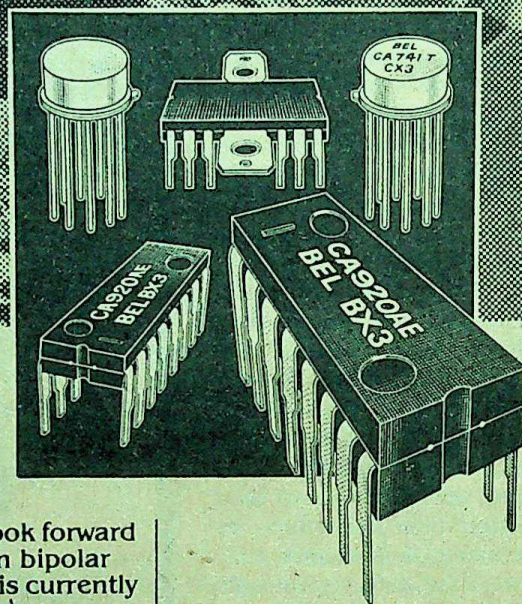
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VIRAL FEVER

Running High

EVEN the onset of winter has failed to bring down temperatures. Medical experts, who had predicted a sharp decline in the viral fever epidemic with the departure of the monsoon, were wondering what had gone wrong.

Sample surveys by the Delhi-based National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) showed that nearly one-third of the capital's population has already fallen prey to the debilitating, no-cure fever in the last three months. Attendance in offices and factories in the capital declined steeply.

In Punjab—where the fever has been nicknamed "disco fever" because it makes the victim's limbs shake—even the paddy harvest has suffered. In a number of villages in Jalandhar, Amritsar and Ferozepore districts, more than half the population was reported to have fallen victim during September and October and at times over 20 per cent of the employees in government offices in Chandigarh were on sick leave.

Inadequate Research: Things were worse in the neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. In fact, according to some estimates, nearly 500 persons have died in the backward eastern Uttar Pradesh—over 50 in Shahjahanpur district alone—because of the virus, complicated with malaria. In Bihar, every private practitioner has been getting nearly a dozen cases daily. The figure is much higher in Tamil Nadu.

Health authorities of most states, however, provide no clear statistics. Said Dr R.S. Rajagopalan, superintendent of the Royapettah Government Hospital in Madras: "We compile no statistics because viral fever is so common." Dr G.P. Sinha of the Patna Medical College said it was impossible to maintain statistics, since Bihar had no technical wherewithal to conclusively diagnose the presence of the virus. Said a senior physician of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS): "It is a major problem but it does not kill. So we, in fact, turn back the patients to smaller dispensaries for palliative treatment."

Unidentified Malady: But while there was unanimity among doctors all over on the need for palliative treatment for the fever, no one seemed to know what exactly they were up against. Most practitioners in Delhi and elsewhere said the symptoms this year were different from that of the *dengue* (Spanish word pronounced 'dengee') that broke out last year during the Asiad.

Physicians also mentioned the fact that a number of people who got dengue last year had fever this year too, though dengue virus

victims become immune to it for life. But while none of the physicians could offer a clue on the identity of the virus, the only institution in Delhi qualified to do so, the NICD, once again firmly stated that it was dengue, though possibly in a slightly different manifestation.

"We had collected blood samples and now have firm serological evidence that it is nothing else but dengue," said Dr A.N. Roychowdhury, director of the NICD, down with fever himself. "We had such a good monsoon this year and these days there is such a heavy movement of population in and out of Delhi which suits dengue." He asserted: "I do not believe in all the sensational things people say."

As for people getting the fever for the second time, he said they may have caught a different strain of the dengue virus. According to virologists, the dengue virus has four strains. The dengue virus is transmitted by a hardy mosquito *aedis aegypti*, a day-biter and domestic breeder.

Urban Phenomenon: "Dengue has been common in Delhi and there were epidemics in 1967, 1970, 1974 and 1982," says Dr Roychowdhury but he has no explanation for the deviation in pattern, with outbreaks in two successive years. "It is possibly due to the sudden change in urban life-styles. Almost every house uses a desert cooler now. Automatic defrost refrigerators and plastic bags too have compounded the problem," he

says, explaining that *aedis aegypti*, which breed in water, has often been found in desert cooler tanks and plastic trays kept beneath the refrigerators. Water also accumulates in paper bags thrown in the open. "In addition, DDA flats have come up everywhere and these are hermetically sealed, making conditions tailor-made for breeding *aedis aegypti*," he says.

His scientists try to explain why paracetamol, the drug which at least brought down the fever last year, has not been so effective of late. Asked Dr S.N. Ray, deputy director of the institute and head of its Epidemiology Department: "Has someone checked the quality of the drug?" Sharing the view, Dr S. Ballaya, a senior virologist at the AIIMS, said: "We have misplaced notions of charity and allow just anyone to manufacture drugs."

The NICD's conclusions are based on a series of surveys conducted among about 9,000 people picked at random in the three Delhi colonies of Moti Nagar, Kidwai Nagar and Ashok Vihar. Said Dr Ray: "We have concluded dengue virus is the cause by a process of elimination. The National Virus Research Centre at Pune is trying to isolate the virus."

Alternative Explanations: But the NICD experts would vouch only for the epidemic in Delhi and with Roychowdhury dismissing dengue as a purely urban phenomenon, there are still doubts as to the exact nature of the fever raging in the villages. One explanation is that in the north, many rural households too have become urbanised. But Dr Ballaya does not rule out the presence of other viruses. Over the years, she says, the deadly Japanese encephalitis virus has been extending westward from its traditional habitat in the paddy-growing areas. Thus the increasing paddy cultivation in the north may have something to do with the fever.

The countryside, she says, may also have been affected by the West Nile virus, which is a lot like the Japanese encephalitis but much milder and "very ill-studied". In Chandigarh, Dr I.C. Pathak, director of the Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research, said his hospital had taken blood samples and "the possibility of mosquitoes carrying the disease could not be ruled out".

But significantly, there seemed to be no concerted effort by experts in Central institutions and the various state capitals to pool data and experience to evolve some kind of a strategy to counter the disease which has made the country lose millions of mandays in two consecutive years—and threatens to continue so. Says Dr Roychowdhury: "It is a self-limiting disease and does not kill." The message of the medical men seems to be—like it or not, live with it.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with bureau report

CASES OF VIRAL FEVER IN DELHI

The sample picked up from Moti Nagar, Kidwai Nagar and Ashok Vihar, about 9,000 people surveyed by National Institute of Communicable Diseases

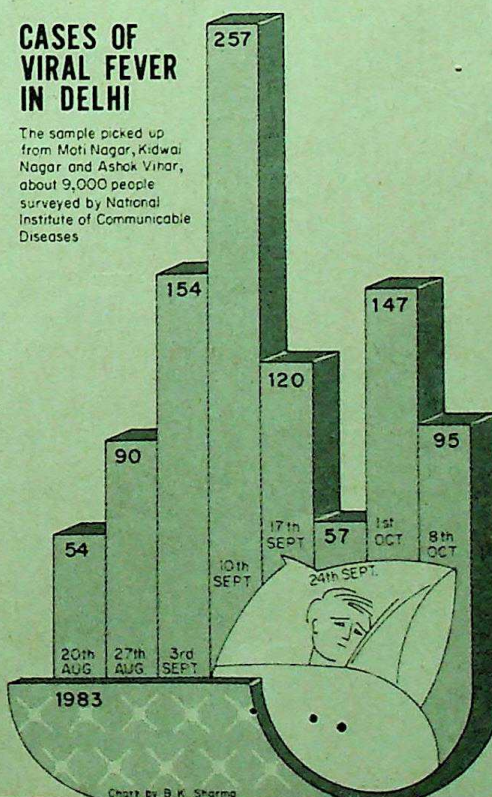
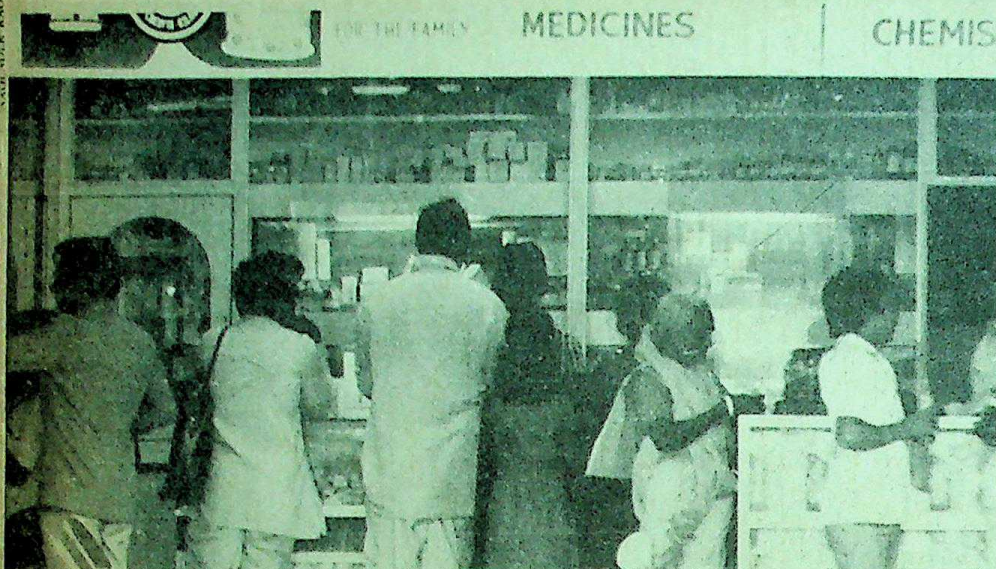


Chart by B.K. Sharma



Customers at a chemist's: increasing abuse

DRUGS

Unhealthy Trend

PATIENT, heal thyself!" seems to be the popular motto—at least in Hyderabad, where a recent study by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) showed that almost every second customer at the city's drugstores comes without a doctor's prescription. "The patient's progress to the stage of self-medication is a new doctor's problem," says Dr E.G. Parmeshwaran, professor of psychology at Osmania University.

The institute's sample survey of the city's drugstores showed that 46 per cent of the customers trust their own diagnosis and prescription and 58 per cent of these buy drugs scheduled only for sale on prescription. But even more worrying are the dubious medical practices that the scrutiny of 26,288 sales at 30 drugstores during the four-month period of the study revealed.

According to Dr Kamala Krishnaswamy, who conducted the study along with the young Dinesh Kumar, also of the NIN, most of the prescriptions that are presented are incomplete. She says: "It is important to realise that the prescription is a therapeutic transaction between the patient and the doctor and must be clear and explicit. This sanctity is sometimes lost. A proper prescription giving all details is all-important in the Indian context as patients are not aware of the risks if drugs are used indiscriminately and without proper medical advice."

Incomplete Prescriptions: However, 39 per cent of the prescriptions that were pre-

sented at the drugstores under survey, did not even mention the doctor's name. And 52 per cent did not mention their affiliations to hospitals or their qualifications. More important—as far as drug abuse is concerned—a majority did not specify the quantity, frequency and the manner in which the drugs were to be taken.

Another disturbing trend that emerged

Money plays a vital role in the problem of drug abuse. For those who believe in treating themselves, an important consideration is...that the cost of the drugs is less than the doctor's ever-mounting fee.

in the survey was the prescription of more than one nutritional product containing the same ingredient. For example, 16 per cent of the prescriptions listed more than one vitamin preparation containing the same elements. According to Dr Krishnaswamy, vitamin and tonic sales are far in excess of their need among the class of people who can afford them. Deficiencies are more prevalent among the poor.

But, the study shows, it is nutritional products that top the list in terms of the number of prescriptions. Antibiotics and analgesics follow in that order. Other items that are popular are hormones and drugs for ailments of the heart, lungs and stomach.

Dangerous Trend: These same medicines are also asked for by those who come without a prescription. Though this practice is hazardous in general, the danger from antibiotics is maximum as those who come without prescriptions often do not take complete course. Among the self-healers, 18 per cent buy less than a day's dosage and only 18 per cent buy the full course.

Dr Krishnaswamy warns: "The consequences of taking inadequate doses is merely therapeutic failure but the emergence of resistance to the drug. Researchers will have to develop more potent drugs." Unfortunately, the impact of drug abuse is not widely realised as the subject is not sufficiently researched and publicised.

Complicating the problem are sociological factors that stem from modernity and development. Says reputed psychiatrist A.A. Majid Khan: "Self-medication is a result of fear. Patients suspect the wrong man suffering from chest pain thinks of a cardiac problem though it may only be a muscular pain. And in that fear they prefer to go to the druggist for a quick remedy than a doctor for a diagnosis."

Economic Factors: But at a more mundane level, it is money that plays a vital role in the problem of drug abuse. For those who believe in treating themselves, an important consideration is often the undeniable fact that the cost of the drugs is less than the doctor's ever-mounting fee. And on the other side of the coin, it is perhaps the profit factor that prompts some doctors to prescribe

a variety of medicines that contain the same ingredients under different brand names. Particularly so in the case of nutritional products. As Dr Krishnaswamy says, "this is an irony for the nutrients can be got at a lesser cost through a balanced diet". In a more censorious tone she adds: "All in the vitamin triad—doctor, patient, pharmacist—are responsible for the high level of drug abuse."

Of course, the other major reason for drug abuse—indeed what makes it possible—is easy availability. After the study, the drug control authorities in Hyderabad have taken strong steps to stop unauthorised sale in the city. But much still has to be done.

As the institute's Director, Dr B.S. Singa Rao, says: "The Hyderabad study is a limited one and only the beginning. More centre studies are essential for a better understanding of the drug consumption pattern." And indeed the task is urgent if the goal of health for all by 2000 A.D. is to be taken seriously.

—AMARNATH K. ME

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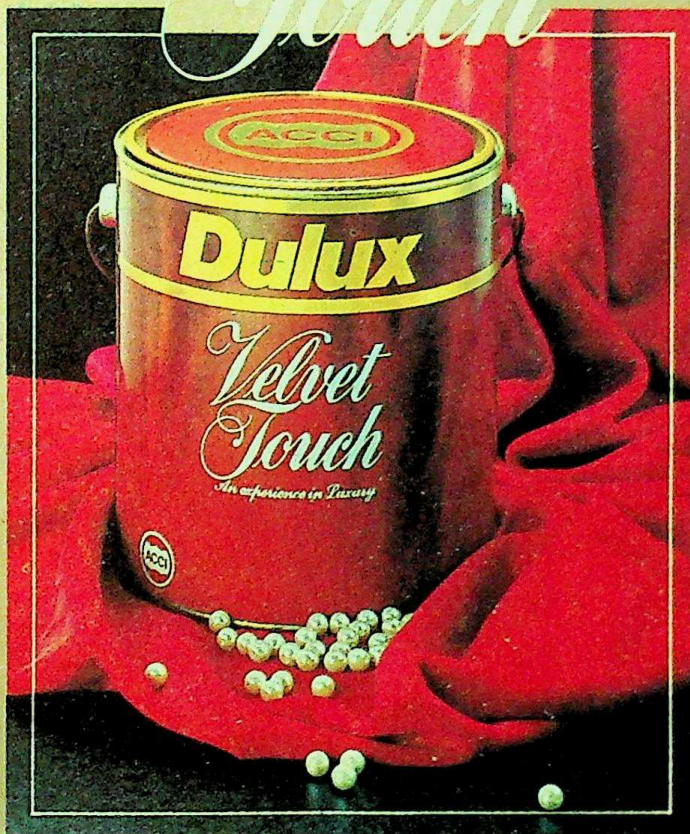
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KARNATAKA

Bidding For Power

FROM the day he became chief minister, Ramakrishna Hegde has had to fend off constant threats to his government. The Congress(I), smarting from its defeat in the state elections, has lost not the slightest opportunity to try to prise away one or any of the 98 Janata MLA's out of Hegde's grip. If they have had no success so far, it is certainly not from want of trying. Last fortnight, senior Congress(I) leaders were once again huddled together in a secret conclave to chalk out a new 'plan of action'—this time with utmost secrecy, letting only a small tightly knit group of 'dependable' politicians know of the operation.

Acutely aware of the dangerously thin margin between leadership of the Treasury and Opposition benches—the Janata Legislature Party has a majority of barely a dozen in a house of 224—and that too only because of support from other groups like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with 18 MLA's and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) with three, Hegde gathered his flock in the spacious and highly-ornamented conference room of the Karnataka Vidhan Soudha. But the loud expressions of faith in the chief minister notwithstanding, Hegde's normally suave

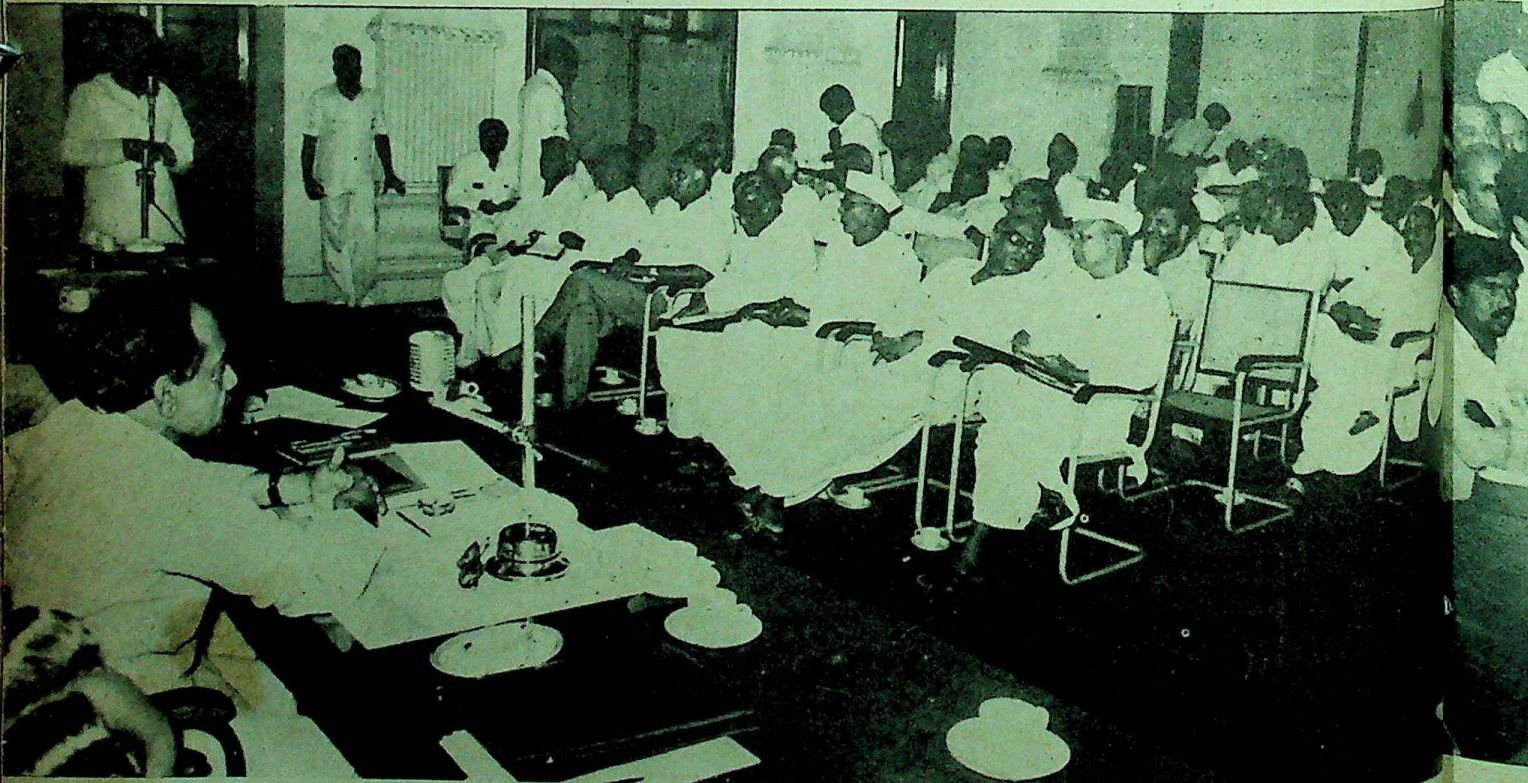
manner betrayed more than a hint of worry as he emerged from the meeting. "They think that they can purchase members from my party," said Hegde. "Even vultures from New Delhi have descended on Bangalore in search of flesh. They must be day-dreaming." But even as Hegde was trying to keep his flock together, the bids for betrayal were going up—from Rs 2 lakh an MLA to over Rs 20 lakh with a ministership.

The Congress(I)'s latest efforts to topple the only Janata government in the country started as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi set off on her week-long diplomatic jaunt to Europe and the UN in September. While Mrs Gandhi hobnobbed with world leaders, her senior aides and Karnataka state Congress(I) leaders headed for Bangalore to make an all-out bid to woo over 45 MLA's from the Janata Party, BJP and the independents who, according to Congress(I) calculations, would be vulnerable to the bait of money and position, or might respond to pressures of caste.

Concerted Moves: In what now appears to be a series of well-coordinated moves, all the MLA's were contacted between September 20 and 26 and asked to withdraw support to the Hegde Government (INDIA TODAY, October 31). In the forefront of the cam-

paign of attrition was the wily Nanje Gowda MP. While K.H. Patil, the portly Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee-I (KPC) chief, denies that he was involved in the plans, Janata MLA's say a powerful Congress(I) comprising Patil, his son H.K. Patil, K.P. treasurer B.V. Desai, K.K. Murthy, former chairman of the Bangalore Development Authority, and Kranti Ranga led the effort. Says Hegde: "They were desperate, engineer defections and even went to the extent of threatening some of my colleagues. But they had to bite the dust." Hegde turned the tables on Congress(I) when he produced what he called 'tape recorded evidence' about the 'toppling bid' in the Assembly. Though he didn't play the tape recorder in the Assembly, a transcript of the conversation was obtained by INDIA TODAY (see box). In addition, Hegde persuaded each one of the Janata MLA's who were approached to state his experiences in the Assembly, in order to publicly embarrass the Congress(I). Examples:

► Hanumantha Rao, a Janata MLA from Afzalpur, stated in the Assembly that on September 21 he was approached to defect. He also disclosed that Kranti Ranga chie-



Hegde addressing Janata legislators: winning confidence

angarappa was to take over as chief minister under the new arrangement;

► A.M. Mariappa, a Scheduled Caste MLA from Devnahathe, alleged in the Assembly that he was offered Rs 25 lakh to defect from the Janata Party;

► G.V. Mantur from Bagalkot assembly constituency alleged that KPCC(I) chief K.H. Patil, and his son H.K. Patil tried to pressurise him to leave the Janata Party and join the Congress(I);

► M. Obanna Raju, a backward caste MLA from Chamrajpet, claimed that he was offered power, money and position if he defected from the Janata Party;

► P.D. Govindraju, MLA from Shantigar, stated that he was offered a ministerial post if he left the Janata along with his other colleagues;

► V. Srinivasan, another backward caste MLA from Yelahanka, alleged that he was taken to top Congress(I) leaders where it was about that Rajiv Gandhi had approved the idea of toppling the Government.

Caste Politics: The Congress(I), quite understandably, concentrated its attempts only on the backward, Scheduled Caste and independent MLA's who are peeved at upper castes like the Lingayats and theokkaligas dominate the Hegde—Agha—government. In addition, over 200 MLA's who fought either as Kranti Ranga candidates or independents after they failed to get Congress(I) nominations, were included in the 'hit list' of probables who might be induced to defect.

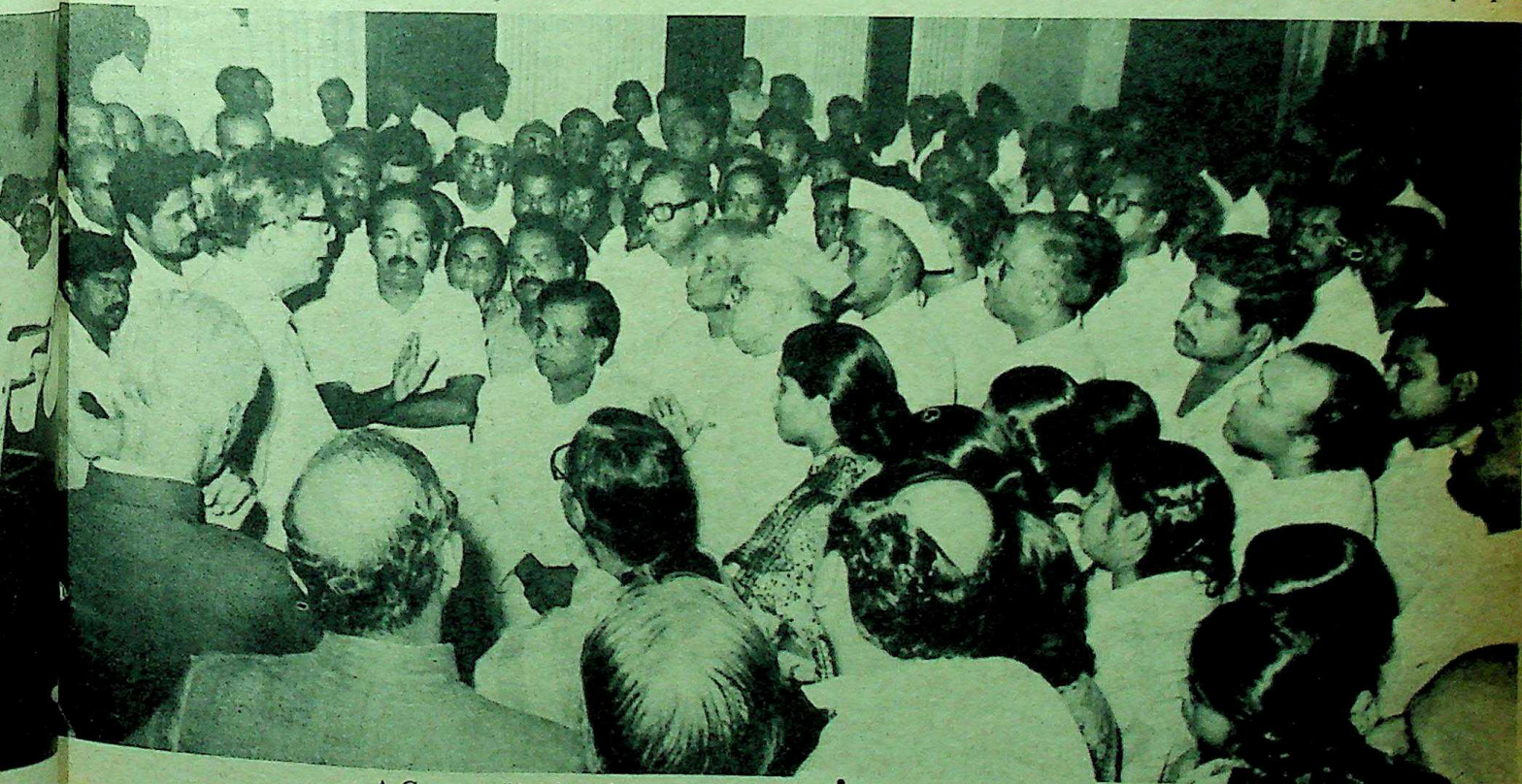
Explained a Congress(I) leader: "Many in the Janata were with us a few months ago. They believe in our principles and ideology. They went to the other side because of Gundu Rao's style of functioning. They can come back home, if they are assured of proper treatment." Added Nanje Gowda: "If they are feeling uncomfortable in the Janata Party, I can't force them to stay there. I am trying to get Congress(I) membership only for those who are coming to us not for any temporary monetary gain or power but because they really believe that the Congress(I) is the right place for them to survive in Karnataka politics."

Congress(I) leaders did try to provide the prospective newcomers with some sort of an ideological fig leaf. A set of letters expressing faith in Congress(I) ideology and Mrs Gandhi's leadership were prepared and the Janata MLA's were asked to sign them. The letters would also have been written proof in the hands of Congress(I) leaders. Said one such letter addressed to KPCC(I) chief Patil: "I have been a member of the Legislative Assembly (Karnataka) and a member of the Janata Party. I have always been a believer of the values, policies and the programmes passed by the Indian National Congress under the able and dynamic leadership of Smt Indira Gandhi, prime minister of India. It is on account of minor differences, I had to be away from the Congress and had to join the Janata Party.... I feel that the time has now come that everyone interested in the unity of this country should rally round and

strengthen the leadership of Smt Indira Gandhi in the interest of the nation, so also in the interest of the development of Karnataka state... I therefore request you kindly to admit me in the Congress." The new entrants were also asked to write letters to the Janata Party president resigning from the Janata Party on account of "the disappointing performance of the Hegde government".

THE IDEA behind these moves was to collect enough resignation letters and submit them to the state Governor, thus presenting Hegde with a *fait accompli*. The Janata MLA's were not the only ones singled out for this attention. Over half a dozen independents and two of the 18 BJP MLA's were also sounded to see if they would be willing to withdraw their support from the Government. According to state BJP chief B.B. Shivappa, a "senior" Congress(I) leader made offers to Vasanta Bangera and R. Pujari, of the BJP, who politely turned them down. Said Bangera: "They shamelessly used my relatives to bring pressure on me."

But Hegde was aware of this behind-the-scenes drama. He cut short his visit to Srinagar to attend the Opposition conclave (INDIA TODAY, October 31) and rushed back to tackle the situation. At once he provided armed guards to those MLA's who had 'requested' them to keep the Congress(I) leaders away and also made a public issue of the toppling game. In a calculated move, he started touring the state to rally the people



A Congress(I) delegation meets Governor Bannerjee: renewed offensive

behind him and the MLA of each constituency was expected to pledge his support to the first-ever Janata ministry in the state. Thundered Hegde at a public meeting in Tumkur: "The Congress(I) is trying to take away your government. You gave us the mandate to run the state for five years but some greedy people want to betray your feelings."

Hegde's moves to publicise the horse-trading paid dividends. The Janata MLA's abandoned any dreams they might have harboured and stuck to their party not least because popular opinion in their constituencies would have taken strong exception to any moves to defect. The Congress(I) party, taken aback by this frontal attack, also beat a strategic retreat temporarily. The local Congress(I) leadership put on an air of

innocence, stoutly denying that it was linked with the manoeuvres. Said Veerappa Moily, leader of the Congress(I) Legislative Party in the Assembly, sanctimoniously: "We never encouraged defections and don't want to pull the Government down. Hegde's government itself is the illegitimate child of marriage between Janata and the defectors. What moral right does he have to accuse us of something for which we are not serious at the moment?" Added Patil: "If we want to form the Government in Karnataka we can do it today. But we don't want to admit those who want to join Congress(I) only for power and affluence. Before admitting anyone we want to ensure that he is committed ideologically. But I want to make it clear that we will not shirk if Hegde runs away after losing the majority support."

Stout Denials: While the state leadership went on the defensive after Hegde's onslaught, the Central high command came out strongly against Hegde's charge that it was engineering defections. Retorted Mooppanar, the AICC(I) general secretary: "Hegde is afraid that some of the Janata MLAs will leave him and come to the Congress. How can we be held responsible for it. Hegde is haunted by the past experience, when the Janata government was pulled down by its own members. Hegde has forgotten that he was he who started the defection game in Karnataka. If now he is the victim of his own game, he should not look for scapegoats."

In this at least, Mooppanar is on solid ground. It was Hegde, who in order to convert his own minority government into a majority one, encouraged independents touching

LEGISLATORS

For The Record

CHIEF Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, battling an alleged Congress(I) attempt to topple his government by enticing MLA's to switch sides, sprang a surprise in the Karnataka Assembly last month when he flourished a tape recording of two conversations purportedly between a Janata Party MLA, Vasu and Kranti Ranga chief, S. Bangarappa, on phone and between Putta Das and Janata MLA V. Srinivasan at his house. INDIA TODAY obtained a free rendering into English of parts of the conversations which took place in Kannada:

Vasu: Sir, I have brought that Mysore person (an MLA) to tackle that man (MLA Narayan Kumar). I feel it is better to make it three.

Bangarappa: No. It is not possible to make it three. Only two each. MLA Venkatesh and others have spoken to him (Narayan Kumar) and he has said two, and agreed to sign after two days.

Vasu: Sir, that Mysore person has to be paid one.

Bangarappa: No. One cannot be paid.

Vasu: Though not one, at least half.

Bangarappa: Half, we can see, have you made any commitment?

Vasu: Yes sir.

Bangarappa: Then it is all right. I agree to whatever you suggest.

Vasu: Sir. Through this Mysore person, we can get his signatures today itself. You get his signatures.

Bangarappa: O.K. It could be done.



Srinivasan: settling terms

Vasu: Sir, shall I bring that Mysore person to your house.

Bangarappa: Now I am coming to the office at 10.00 a.m. since there is a press meeting and going back to my house. You can bring him by 12 noon or 12.30 p.m.

Vasu: O.K. sir. I will bring him at 12.30 p.m.

The second conversation is between Congress(I) leader Putta Das and Janata MLA V Srinivasan.

Putta Das: There are three suggestions which you should pick up and confirm. Then we can proceed further and see what changes have happened. I was responsible for the friendship between Bangarappa and Sanjay Gandhi. To remove (former chief minister) Gundu Rao I met Sanjay Gandhi and asked for time for two to three months. It was Gundu Rao's good luck, else I would have gone ahead. I had good chances but it was not because of Sanjay Gandhi. You should

"My coming should be a secret. I have good reputation with the chief minister and my prestige will be lowered if it is leaked out to chief minister as he has confidence in me and he is like my father."

—Janata MLA V. Srinivasan

listen to what he says and have contact directly with Rajiv Gandhi. You should meet and speak and finalise at this high level.

Mariyappa, Muniraj of Hebbal (both MLA's)—what did they say? You can have a car similar to what Gundu Rao has—an Impala.

It is not a question of what we discuss among ourselves but the contacts and to decide if they tell us clearly.

Srinivasan: I have been in the Janata since 1978 when there were only the DMK, AIDMK, RPI and the Congress. There was no place for the Janata Party then. This time there is a change. You should give assurance and give time. My coming should be a secret. I have good reputation with the chief minister and my prestige will be lowered if it is leaked out to chief minister as he has confidence in me and he is like my father. I have been given the Janata ticket from 1978 to 1983.

Now, if you give me assurance and take me away, and later it should not

state lea... Congress(I) MLA's to join the Janata as... Soon after he was sworn... as chief minister on January 10, 1983, he... admitted not only 10 of the 18 MLA's as full or... associate members of the Janata Party but... also admitted a Congress(I) MLA into his... halanx of supporters. Between June and... September, four Congress(I) MLA's resigned... from the party though two of them later went... back to the Congress(I).

Since Hegde rewarded many of the... defectors with ministerial and corporate be... on gam... Congress(I) leaders started accusing... of bribing MLA's. In addition, they... launched a counter-offensive which was pri... is on st... aimed at keeping the Congress(I)... in order... Admitted a KPCC(I) office... ment in earer: "Frankly speaking, we were afraid of... endents ouching Janata MLA's, but Hegde started

demolishing our own house. If he expected us to sit back and watch our doom, he was sadly mistaken. By our strategy, not only have we prevented our base from shrinking, but put Hegde on the defensive."

Political Strategy: But more important than anything else, what provoked the Congress(I) leadership to try to destabilise Hegde was the state Government's readiness to provide a platform for vitriolic outpourings against the Central Government. Hegde annoyed the Central Government by first calling a meeting of southern chief ministers at which several speeches against the Centre were made. Later he joined Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao in launching a tirade against the Centre. Since Mrs Gandhi is left with only one chief minister, K. Karunakaran in Kerala, who heads a 10-

party coalition, she could not allow the south to become a centre of opposition activity.

Hegde has survived the latest attack but the hawks within his own party have caused strong ripples in the heterogeneous Janata Party. His woes have also been multiplied by the anti-BJP statements made by Janata chief Chandra Shekhar. As a result of the ill-timed remarks, the BJP has ceased its unconditional support and changed it to selective support. Even the CPI(M) has come out recently with a statement expressing unhappiness over Hegde's performance. At the moment none of these parties are willing to withdraw their support but Hegde must walk a tight rope, trying to show results, looking back over his shoulder all the while to keep an eye open for back stabbers.

— PRABHU CHAWLA in Bangalore



Putta Das (left) and Bangarappa: counting the cost

happen that I get nothing. I will talk with chief minister and tell everything. You should give me time.

Putta Das: You will be taken to the party and made general secretary or district secretary in Bangalore. We will not give any false assurance as Bangarappa.

Srinivasan: Whoever comes up whether it is M.C. Perumal (an MLA) or B. Srinivasan as a minister or chairman, there is no difference.

Putta Das: In the Congress, if you join, you will be taken to Delhi to meet Rajiv Gandhi and at a press conference it will be announced. Your coming to the Congress should be done at a high level and our people should feel happy. If you accept and if it does not happen there are other advantages like export permit, all-India licence, foreign tours, power and position—it is definite. If this is done, there should be no change later. Cabinet minister or minister of state can be immediate.

There is no difference between Congress and Janata. There will be credit for you, and we will keep you in the front. Let Gundu Rao, Putta Das and (KPCC-I) President) K.H. Patil speak to you. Twelve persons will join from the Janata and with your coming there will be one more. We will only add your name to the list but will not announce. It will be done after speaking to you. We can speak in the car itself, and later have talks at home after sending out other persons. It will be done at a high level as desired. We will see what happens.

Putta Das: We have stated that this government will go and it is definite. When it has been decided that there should not be a ministry of Shri Deve Gowda (Janata minister for public works department), Mr Nanje Gowda (Congress(I) MP) would definitely say that it is he who did it. If there is any confusion again, the 62 MLA's who were with the Urs' government would leave. Now, out of that, what we have is only

eight MLA's, and only four are stepping forward with clubs to topple this government.

All that is a drama, (Union Minister) Veerendra Patil is afraid of us. None of us can come to power. What we have learnt is to pull down some persons and bring in others, and we have thus succeeded only by extending support. Now we are also having followers. What is it that you want now?

Srinivasan: There is one Anthony Doss, a Youth Congress worker, who is the best well-wisher. What we have decided is to give 25 votes since there was a move for 25 persons coming. What do you say?

Putta Das: You fix up some time or the other. Now one has come from Delhi. I do not know what we have to tell to K.H. Patil. If you give an assurance, you can have whatever time you require. If you tell by what time you would be free we will get both K.H. Patil and (Union Minister of State for Industry) S.M. Krishna to one place. We do not want his house or another's house. We will get into a guest-house.

Putta Das: Nagaraj, don't mistake if I say this "K.H. Patil and S.M. Krishna, if you want that this ministry should be Scheduled Caste oriented". That is all. Our quorum is over. As usual we give the next (chance) and then the quota will be finished. What is required is it should be Scheduled Caste oriented, you might have asked that is all the trouble here. We are ready.

Srinivasan: Let Dasahanumaiah be here, all of you can go, we are going elsewhere. Putta Das, Nanje Gowda, Krishna, (Union Health Minister) Shankaranand, K.H. Patil... It should be decided today itself.

ARCHITECTURE

Sculpture To Live In

FROM a distance, it looks like a grouping of red-brick ant-hills. Closer up, the structures dissolve to assume stranger proportions, revealing a conglomerate of arches, igloo-shapes and serrated expanses of brick wall set in luxuriously landscaped gardens. Passers-by in New Delhi's fashionable Diplomatic Enclave area—known as Chanakyapuri—have for months been wondering what the building is about. One viewer describes it as “an upturned can of earthworm droppings” while another thinks the effect created is of a desert casbah beginning to sprout lingams.

Sections of the capital's articulate architectural community have been openly expressing their exasperation—and horror. But the small fraternity of Belgians in the city are well pleased—for the building is their new embassy—and the minor storm it is causing is what they expected when they commissioned painter and muralist Satish Gujral to design and build it three years ago.

Completed last fortnight at a cost of Rs 2.3 crore, the Belgian Embassy is in fact two buildings: the main chancery block containing offices and a chancellor's house. And a grand ambassador's residence at the back, built around a fabulous reception hall with a flooring of Italian marble and a dramatic fireplace, surrounded by extensive garden views. Separating the two buildings is a deep-walled garden containing a swimming pool set on terraced slopes—its backdrop an optical illusion of brickwork resembling a mural that contains the changing rooms. Landscaping those gardens alone cost Rs 40 lakh.

Controversial Project: But the dust raised by the building is not all due to the nearly one lakh trucks of earth Gujral brought in to create artificial slopes on the site. The trouble is that Gujral is no architect—not a graduate, that is, of an architectural school with a professional degree—and the fact that a professional painter first bagged, and has now pulled off, such a

prestigious commission on a turnkey basis causing personal agony and professional lousy among architects. Few embassies in New Delhi have been designed by an Indian—and Belgium is the first among European countries to do so. In fact, when Gujral embarked on his first architectural commission a few years ago—he has previously built a couple of large baronial mansions for Modis and Sindhi millionaires like Daryanis—a group of architects took exception to the artist calling himself an architect and threatened legal action.

Opinion is once again divided not only over Gujral's intrusion of the profession but also over the artistic merit and function of his latest project. Says Satish Grover, a leading architect who designed and built the Asiad swimming pool: “I have absolutely no objection that a painter or sculptor take over architecture. But the building he produces must not be based only on personal expression. I think a building is successful if it



Gujral beside his recently completed creation, the Belgian Embassy: driven by a vision

what it is. I haven't been inside the Belgian Embassy, but from the outside it doesn't look like an embassy."

Architect Romi Khosla, who recently represented Gujral's building at a seminar sponsored by the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture Committee in Kuala Lumpur, disagrees and says: "Since Le Corbusier left, at last there is a building in India of world class. Gujral's building is a kick in the face of architects who believe that box-like structures are today's salvation. The Belgian Embassy has scale, grandeur and sensual exploration of spaces."

Provocative Design: It would be wrong to say that artist Gujral—now 57 and with greying hair and goatee—is unfazed by the variety of reactions his architectural whodunnit evokes. In part he relishes it—for the purpose of his statement, he admits, was to provoke dialogue—and at the same time he is also beginning to relax after nearly three years of apprehension of getting the building absolutely right down to the last brick and finish it on time (it was completed only 19 days behind schedule). A contractor who worked for Gujral on the embassy says he behaved like "a man driven by his vision—when he was unable to use crutches (necessary because his thigh bones broke in an accident in 1981) he got himself a litter built by attaching bamboo poles to an armchair and being carried over the site".

It could be argued that Gujral has passed through more phases of experimentation than any other contemporary Indian artist. Since his university days in Punjab when he tore up bedsheets to record his automatic vision of the Partition tragedy because he couldn't afford to buy canvas, he has dealt with a staggering variety of media. There was a time in the 1950s when his canvases turned granular in texture before he switched to vivid, and often outrageous collage in paper; line drawings at another stage gave way to extensive experimentation with ceramics—several of his mammoth murals of the period still adorn the capital's public buildings. Later, he went into sculpture, producing eighty, geometric studies with books, handles, mirrors and kitchen sink fittings; later still, he created an exhibition of wall-hangings made up of charred blocks of wood held together with leather straps and studs and buckles resembling a sado-masochist's fantasy. Provocative, sensationalist, no.

Gujral's defence of his foray to architecture relies heavily on the

history of art: Michelangelo, he argues, was a builder besides a painter. Corbusier was more a painter and sculptor than an architect. And Sir Edwin Lutyens, the builder of imperial Delhi, was no architect at all—he started out as a landscape painter before being employed as a draughtsman in an architectural firm.

FURTHERMORE, he explains that the word "mural" in French literally means "wall"—and as a muralist it was but natural that his preoccupation with walls would lead to architecture. Gujral also believes that, barring the period of post-war European modernism, architecture was a subject to be discussed in public like poetry, painting or politics. And he sees his vision as a return to that—"a building like a poem should stand as an image to rejuvenate you," he says, adding that since human beings spend 90 per cent of their life in buildings or between them or around them, "architecture more than any art affects the human mind". Architecture for him remains art—a highly personal, emotional expression, not a social science—since the "actual craft is for the artist merely a tool" and "it is not a great

idea that makes art but a great artist".

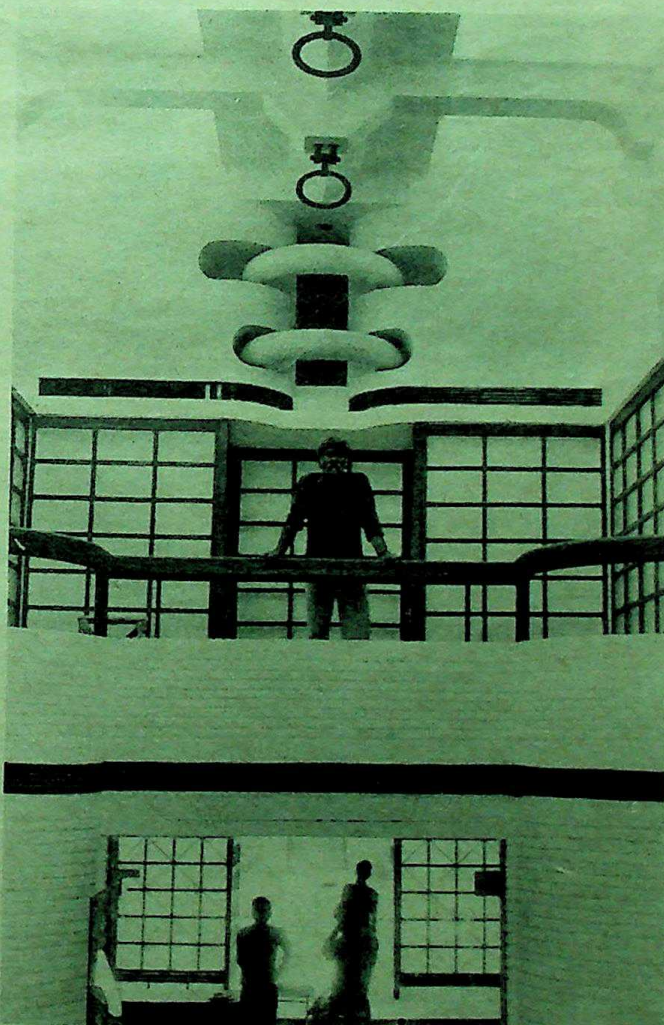
For him, the Bauhaus of form-follows-function is outdated. That such modernist concepts which have been long discarded in the West should be blindly followed in India to go on creating formless, loveless structures around us, is to him ironic. "We've learned to live like imitative pigs," he says. Of course buildings must be functional, but the form is of utmost importance, "because it is form alone that distinguishes the nude from the naked".

Wealthy Clients: Still, there are those who may regard samples of his houses as way-out or ostentatious—the Daryani home on Prithviraj Road is a series of white plaster arches and the Modi house near Lodi Gardens a wild juxtaposition of arches and domes in sandstone tile supported by extravagant piping painted bright scarlet. Gujral-built residences, as a member of the Modi family says, "quickly become talking points". But are they functional to live in? "Yes very," says J.R. Daryani who commissioned the first home Gujral built, "let's put in this way: if I were to choose an architect again, I'll get him."

Moreover, the fact remains that Gujral's clients to date remain among the very wealthy, partly because he frequently decides on interior decoration as well—down to the selection of paintings, objects and furnishings. "He's the *haute couture* of houses," says a prominent architect sarcastically, "and damned expensive to boot." Moreover, he rebuilds considerably, tearing down walls as new forms strike him, thereby sending up costs. No one, says Gujral, of ordinary means has come to him for an offer, though his project after the Belgian Embassy is to do a small house in 200 sq yd for a friend.

But if the ultimate testimonial of a building comes from the people who use it, then Gujral's recent client, the Belgian ambassador, who will be both working and living in the embassy, seems to be converted into a Gujral enthusiast. Says H.E.J. Hollants Van Looche, who jokingly refers to the embassy's style as "Mughal-Flemish": "There are those who think I'm behaving like a Belgian viceroy. That is not true. We're a small country with not a large or historical presence in India. But if an embassy building is any reflection of a country's presence, then Satish's design helps us in our job: not merely as a prestige symbol but as an instrument for the job we do."

—SUNIL SETHI



Inside the embassy: defying convention

The Nobel Astrophysicist

Novel Ideas: Chandrasekhar was born in 1918. In 1935, at the age of 17, he presented his theory (see below) to the Royal Astrophysical Society meeting in London on January 11, 1935, before an illustrious audience that included his mentor, Arthur Eddington. In a nutshell his theory states that dying stars have a critical mass that is 1.4 times the mass of the sun. Stars with a mass less than this critical mass, after exhausting all their nuclear fuel, collapse under gravity into a dense mass called the "white dwarf." But stars heavier than the critical mass simply go on collapsing beyond the white dwarf stage getting denser and denser and smaller and smaller. Such objects are today known as black holes and the critical mass has gone into textbooks as "Chandrasekhar's Limit."

"Birthday Gift"

A. I was in India in 1961, in 1968 and again in 1982. I must say the scientific atmosphere in India has enormously improved between 1961 and 1982. There is no doubt about it.

Fifty years ago when Chandrasekhar put forward his theory, nobody believed it. Under the prevailing theory of the time all stars irrespective of their final mass ended up as dwarf stars. Eddington described Chandrasekhar's critical mass theory as "outlandish". In the same meeting Eddington said that nature would not permit a star to keep on radiating and contracting. "It is absurd."

Eddington's international stature and influence were such that even physicists, who just believed that Chandrasekhar was right, did not dare to counter him publicly. Says Chandrasekhar: "Eddington made a fool of me. I was distraught. I did not know whether to continue my career." In 1931, he quit Cambridge and joined the University of Chicago where he put his theory into a book, *Introduction to the Study of Stellar Structure*, and then stopped worrying about it. He turned to other problems: the scattering of light, behaviour of hot fluids in magnetic fields, stability of rotating objects and finally to black holes.

Increased Importance: As the Nobel committee in its citation said, Chandrasekhar was honoured for "his theoretical studies on the physical processes of importance to the structure and evolution of stars". It was the work he did in his 20s. But why this belated award? Says Yash Pal, well-known space scientist who knows Chandrasekhar quite well: "The work done by Chandrasekhar is finding more relevance today than ever before. We use his equations in space research, remote sensing, and modern astronomy. In fact, there is no field in which some or other of his discoveries are not used." Jayant Narlikar, a renowned cosmologist at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay, says Chandrasekhar deserved the prize

years ago but adds that "it is better late than never". Chandrasekhar himself never set his sights on the Nobel Prize. In an interview to *Science* magazine he said: "My motive has not been to solve a single problem, but to acquire a perspective of an entire area."

In fact, astrophysics as it is understood today owes its development to the entirely new perspective given to it by Chandrasekhar. Neutron stars—objects made entirely of neutrons—and black holes which gobble up anything nearby but do not allow even light to escape, are all now interpreted in terms of Chandrasekhar's famous Critical Mass theory.

Chandrasekhar was born on October 19, 1910, in Lahore. He met his wife Lalitha when both were physics students in Madras University. He considers himself an atheist but in his interview to *Science*, he admits that he sometimes wonders about the

"The work done by Chandrasekhar is finding more relevance today than ever before. We use his equations in space research, remote sensing, and modern astronomy. In fact, there is no field in which some or other of his discoveries are not used."

Hindu tradition of sanyas. Considering Chandrasekhar's penchant for work it is unlikely that he will ever try to follow such a course—especially as he has already begun studies on a new field: cosmology.

Simple Life-style: Chandrasekhar is respected by everyone who comes into contact with him not only for his intellect but for his simplicity and friendliness. "He is a marvellous man," says F.C. Auluck, a former Delhi University physics professor. "When I was in Chicago I wanted to call on him. He said 'come home'. It was an unearthly hour, about midnight. Sure enough, he was there waiting for me, fresh and smiling." And teaching was Chandrasekhar's passion. Even in the severest Chicago winter he used to drive to university to take a class of only two students. The students—Yang and Lee—both later received the Nobel Prize in physics.

Though the Nobel Prize climaxed his 50 years of work in physics, Chandrasekhar has a string of other honours and medals. At 36, he became the distinguished service professor of physics. In 1952 he became editor of the prestigious *Astrophysical Journal*. The same year he was awarded the Bruce Medal of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. He received the gold medal of the Royal Astronomical Society (1953), the Rumford Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1957) the Royal Medal of the Royal Society, London (1962), the National Medal of Science, US (1967) and the Draper Medal of the US National Academy of Science (1971). Chandrasekhar has also delivered the 1968 Nehru Memorial Lecture at New Delhi. He last visited India in 1982. He plans to make another visit soon but, said, "it will be a private visit, with my family."

THE THEORY

Cosmic Death

THE EXPRESSION "Chandrasekhar's Limit" has been in use in astrophysics since the early '30s when Chandrasekhar determined the minimum mass of a dying star enabling it to survive. The death of a star is a chilling cosmic phenomenon, marked by its swelling into a "red giant", its subsequent shrinking into a "white dwarf", and, in cases, its ultimate obliteration into a pulsar or as a "black hole".

Stars are constantly collapsing as a result of their own gravitational force. The collapse, in its turn, triggers thermonuclear explosions inside them, and the ensuing energy counteracts the gravitational pull, creating a state of

equilibrium—till the nuclear furnace uses up all fuel available in the star's core. In the process hydrogen atoms are converted into helium. In the case of heavy stars, even helium is transformed into carbon and oxygen. The nuclear alchemy stops with everything changing into iron, an element that releases no energy.

As the furnace cools off, the force of gravitation again reigns unchecked, and the star condenses into a dense, dazzling ball. It still dazzles because the electrons, freed from atoms, keep moving; but the star shrinks to several thousandth part of its original radius. It is then regarded as the "white dwarf". Chandrasekhar's main area of enquiry was the fate of the white dwarfs and their further evolution.

In doing so, he combined the principles of quantum mechanics with the laws guiding the properties of particles

that move quickly. Studying the behaviour of electron flow, he plotted the correlation between the radii of collapsed stars and their masses, on a curve.

The curve showed that electron pressure could counteract gravitation only as long as the mass of the star did not exceed 1.44 times that of the Sun: the Chandrasekhar Limit. If the star's mass is less than this level, it can carry on as a white dwarf. Stars about four times the mass of the Sun, change into pulsars, or neutron stars. However, the heavier ones have no defence against the gravitational pressure. In that case, matter is ultimately squeezed out of existence, giving rise to black holes. Chandrasekhar argues that if the Earth were to shrink to a radius of 2.5 km, it would become such a black hole, permitting no light to escape from it.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Catching Up

WHEN the *Andhra Sachitra Vara Patrika*, the illustrated weekly Telugu magazine, celebrated its diamond jubilee recently, the event spoke for the resilience of the stolid journal in a field which is becoming increasingly competitive every year. The weekly, the oldest surviving journal in Andhra Pradesh, celebrated the occasion with its distinctive sense of conservatism: a tame colour illustration of Ganesha—quite a contrast to the lurid pictures of film stars which form the staple fare of most of its contemporaries.

Things are beginning to happen in Telugu journalism, rather slowly but surely. Andhra Pradesh is one of the most backward states in the country in terms of literacy. In the past 10 years, the state's literacy rate barely rose by 5 per cent to make it 30 per cent as against the national average of 36 per cent. During the same period, the circulation of newspapers and periodicals in the state shot up from 1.05 million to 1.78 million copies—an impressive hike of 70 per cent. Added to the state's population of publications in the past decade are 16 dailies, 35 weeklies and 91 other periodicals.

Improving Growth: Compared to the circulation figures of the other three southern states, the growth of the press in Andhra Pradesh may not sound impressive. Tamil Nadu (literacy rate 46 per cent) leads with 6.87 million copies, followed by Kerala (69 per cent) with 4.29 million and Karnataka (38 per cent) with 1.9 million. But what happened to the language press in Kerala and West Bengal by way of the boom in the 1970s is beginning to happen in Andhra Pradesh now.

For a population of 53.6 million people, 1.78 million copies of newspapers and magazines are seemingly low. But the slow but impressive growth during the past decade is a significant pointer to what will happen in the 1980s. Says P. Venkateswara Rao, editor of the *Andhra Prabha* weekly: "There are several factors for the slow growth—lack of sufficient vitality in Telugu literature unlike in Malayalam and Tamil, low educational standards and the shortage of professional journalists."

Obviously, however, there is tremendous potential for growth. *Eenadu* has, since its inception in 1974, managed to exploit this potential, capturing a record circulation of 3.47 lakh this year. Says Ramoji Rao, its chief editor, exuberantly: "Our hope is to take it some day to one million, and even then there will be scope for other papers to

grow as mass-circulating dailies." *Eenadu's* commanding success is due to aggressive marketing and a vibrant style that capitalises on the nuances of colloquisms in the language of the area it is sold in. But there is more to it, as A.B.K. Prasad, former editor of the paper, recalls: "We broke fresh ground in starting *Eenadu* from Vishakhapatnam in 1974 with dramatic looks. For the first time, horizontal make-up of pages, sports photos on page 1, and reporting in easily-understood language was introduced to readers in an area where they got the day's paper only in the afternoon."

Increasing Circulations: *Eenadu's* success story is repeated, albeit modestly, in the improving figures of other Telugu journals. A notable example is *Andhra Jyoti*, the single-edition paper owned by K.L.N. Prasad, Congress(I) MP, and published from Vijayawada—its circulation has in the past nine years gone up from 25,000 to 68,000.

In a bid to boost its poor circulation of 16,000, owner of the *Andhra Bhoomi* and



Telugu magazines: slow but impressive growth

Congress(I) MP T. Chandrashekhara Reddy, hired poet and satirist Gajjala Malla Reddy and a team of footslogging reporters from the *Eenadu* stable. But the group is not doing too badly, on the whole. It runs the states' oldest English daily, *The Deccan Chronicle* and the tremendously popular *Andhra Bhoomi* weekly. The success of the weekly is in a large measure due to the fiction of Yandamuri Veerendranath, a chartered accountant and easily the most popular writer in Telugu today. Veerendranath churns out spell-binding fantasy in the tradition of *The Exorcist* and the *Omen*, and grandmothers' tales of the occult. Vindicating the kind of role he plays in the weekly—enthralled women write hundreds of letters asking for his advice on many matters, and there is even the typical college girl from Vijayawada who committed suicide on discovering through correspondence and a meeting that the writer was married.

Populist Tactics: The success of the journal is becoming increasingly proportional to the extent it has been able to pander to the

tastes of its readers. Explains K. Ch. Reddy, editor of the *Andhra Bhoomi*: "Fiction is the staple of Telugu readers—serialised novels or short stories." The favourite subject is, of course, films. Subrahmanya Sarma, editor, *Andhra* weekly, says: "The readers' fondness for stars exemplifies their preference for chief minister." Naturally film magazines are going great guns—the weekly *Sita* of the *Eenadu* group, begun in 1976, and *chitra* of the Andhra Jyoti group both have had circulations of nearly one lakh. Veteran journalists deplore the accompanying lowering of standards that popular magazines brings. Regrets P. Subrahmanya Sarma: "The pot-pourri in our magazines lacks the flair of literary writing like in the days when independent editors insisted on writing from writers."

Not all journals work on this principle, however. *Yuva*, and the *Eenadu* group's *Chatura* and *Vipula* are among the exceptions. Says A. Sudhakara Rao, editor of *Yuva*: "We scrupulously avoid photographs on the cover and inside, as a serious literary magazine, to encourage artists along with writers." Similarly, the oriented journals like *Aruntara* and *na* keep strictly off pulp and romance, though they cannot boast of high circulations, either.

Innovative Gamble: Monthly magazines have indeed been very innovative. *Jyoti* (circulation 24,000) and *Swachchha* (circulation 22,800) offer a novelette or a story pasted inside—to the reader's bonus, at no extra cost. The trend of the idea is *Vijaya*, a five-in-one magazine published from Madras. There are

separate sections—short stories, a serial novel, a novel based on history, current news, humour, and yet another novel—which can be pulled out. They add up to 100 pages, and the magazine is priced at 10 paise, which is the same for most magazines of the genre. A new woman's monthly, *Jyoti*, is now trying to repeat the feat.

Strangely, Telugu journalism has shied away from making the logical change of modern technological methods that has changed the face of contemporary journalism everywhere else. Typically, it is the *Patrika* that has now taken the lead in changing to photosetting. *Andhra Bhoomi* and *Eenadu* are expected to follow suit in the race for better production technology. The investment will be well worth it. As media watcher and analyst Dr T. R. Murthy, deputy editor, *The Deccan Chronicle*, says: "The untapped reservoir of talent and the leap-frogging in production technology will make the Orwellian boom time for the Telugu press."

—AMARNATH K.



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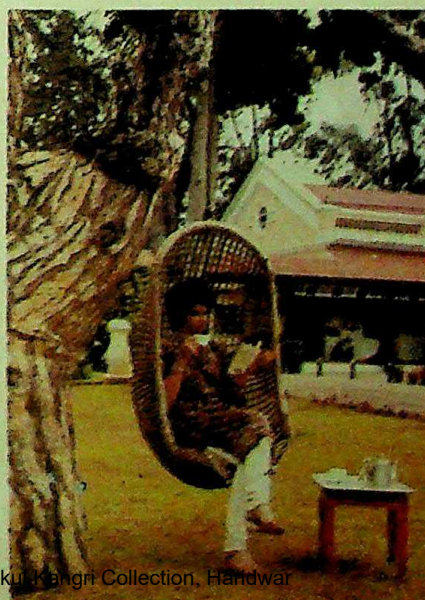
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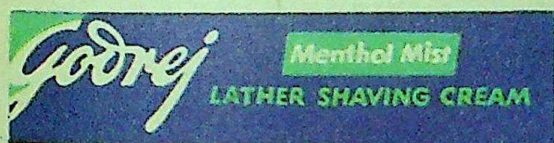


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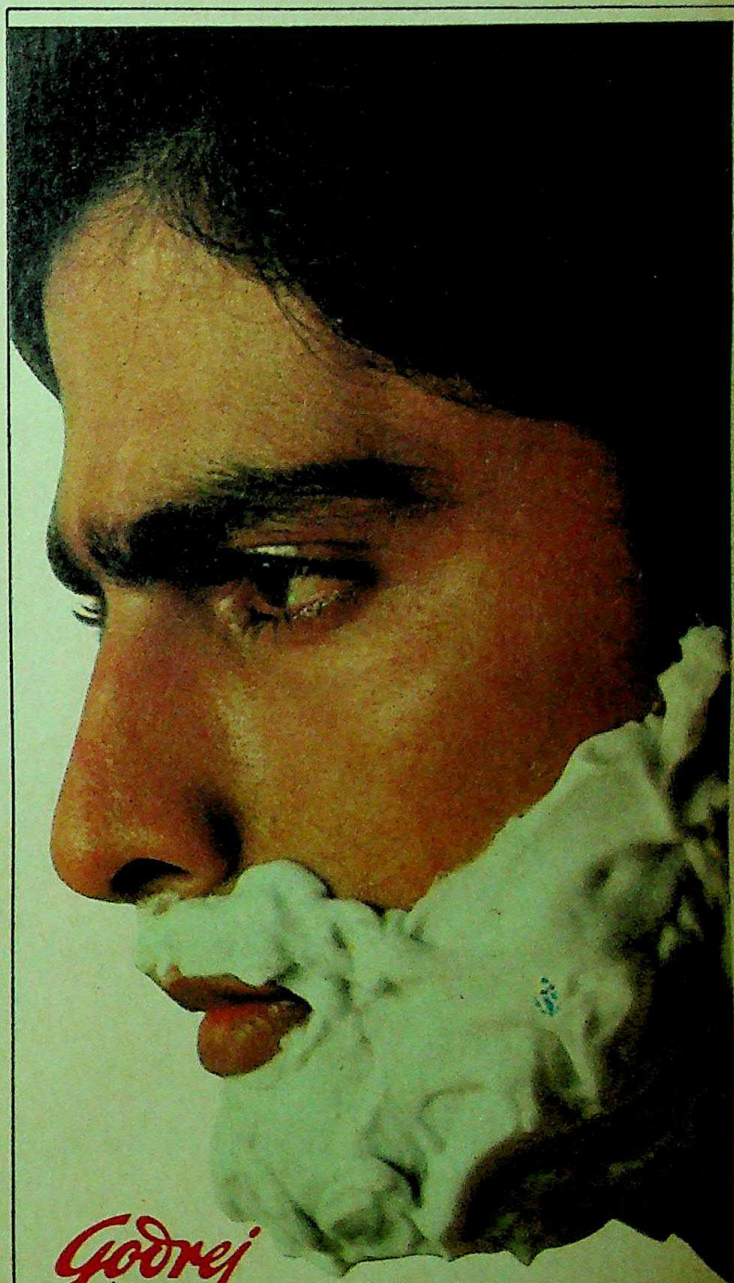
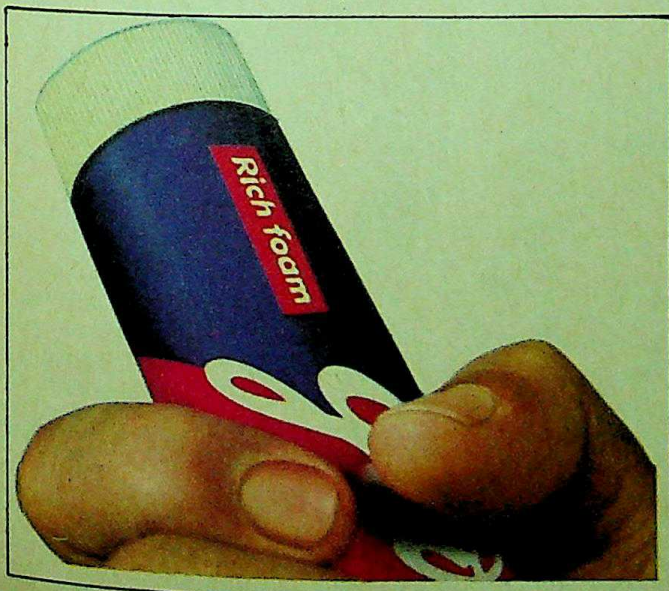
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You always knew he could. It somehow you didn't think it could be so soon. Especially after you took off the trainer wheels (he insisted that you did). Wobbling across the compound. And falling. And trying again. Then suddenly he did it. Today you hear him say it very often — 'See Daddy, I told you I could do it.' Because he knows that learning to do anything is fun. He found that when he learnt to ride a bike.

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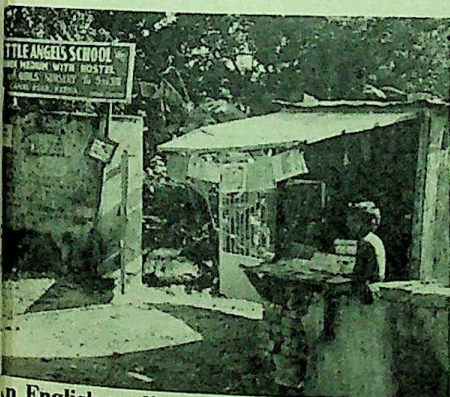
HAR

Square One

THE EDUCATIONAL system in Bihar seems to be in a constant state of flux. Last fortnight, in keeping with the state Government policy of experimenting with school education, the State Council Education, Research and Training (SCERT) announced yet another 'new policy' to replace the ten-plus-two system which was opted in 1981.

The policy, which is to be tried from the 85 academic session, makes English and arithmetic compulsory subjects, with English making a comeback after four years. English was first made optional in 1967, and once Karpoori Thakur was the then education minister, it was dubbed the 'Karpoori vision'. As the number of students passing in this division swelled, the Kedar Pande ministry tried to reintroduce English, and finally it was made compulsory by the Jannath Mishra government in 1975.

However, in 1981, with the country opting the ten-plus-two system, Bihar opted it too, but with a few minor changes, one of which related to English—'read but need not pass'. Dr Singh, who is the head of the Education Department in Patna University and has been associated with a number of committees and commissions on education, said: "Changes in education policy in Bihar have never been based on research but depended on whims of some



In English-medium school: mushrooming

...bureaucrats and politicians and are totally personalised."

Surprising Changes: While both students and parents have been trying to cope with the frequent changes in the syllabus, the last two major changes in the new policy were equally surprising. The three-language formula, which makes Hindi and Sanskrit compulsory for Hindi-speaking students indicates that the SCERT has once again messed up on this front. Experts and teachers point out that under the three-language formula the idea was to encourage the study of the

mother tongue, along with a link language and any other language in keeping with the national policy, but once again Bihar adopted its own formula by making Sanskrit the third language. Said Ramjee Prasad Singh, general secretary of the All India Psychometric and Educational Research Association: "Bihar has been maintaining status quo in the matter of language policy since long and this new formula too is no better. Sanskrit is not a modern language and its introduction as a compulsory subject is meaningless."

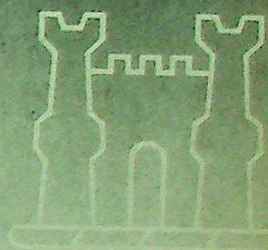
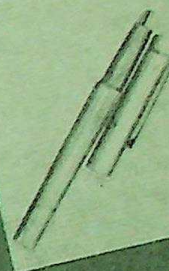
But according to Dharendra Prasad, director of SCERT, the syllabus was modified only after a sample survey in 400 out of Bihar's 3,204 high schools had been conducted. Comprehensive questionnaires to teachers and guardians along with meetings between educationists and teachers were conducted, and recommendations were then forwarded to a high level committee which included the present Chairman of the Bihar School Examination Board, S.P. Singh. In fact the committee found that the present system which included 15 papers, was too much for the student and the syllabus will now have only 10 papers.

Bleak Future: As the Government run schools continue to suffer because of the constant changes in the SCERT's policies, private schools promising instruction through 'English medium' have mushroomed throughout the state. Said Ramjee Prasad: "We have been saying that by making English an optional subject in school and college, it would become an elitist language." With an estimated 3 lakh students appearing for the matriculation examinations every year, the rush for admission in privately run public schools has mushroomed. Meena Bachaspati, headmistress of a private school said: "The number of students is swelling to such an extent that every school has to run morning and day sections and yet they cannot cope with the ever-increasing demand." Added Y.K. Sudarshan, director of yet another private school in Patna: "In my opinion a day will come when there will be no children in government schools...the private schools will be the only alternative left."

As it is, students from Bihar find it difficult to get admission in colleges outside the state because of the poor standard of education. And while the SCERT's suggestion to reintroduce English on a compulsory basis gives most government schools a better chance of maintaining a high standard comparable to private schools, most educationists in the state feel that before the new system can properly establish itself, the Government may introduce yet another policy which will bring the system back to square one.

—FARZAND AHMED

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The Skin Haven

► *MARLIT Schulz, a German tourist, had bought a fur coat in Kashmir. At Frankfurt, she declared it to the customs authorities. The Legal Procurement Certificate (LPC) she carried with her described the fur as 'Moolen' skins. The scientific name below that was of a non-existent species, and described as 'vermin'. The skins belonged to jungle cats, and the coat was compounded. After months of correspondence with Indian wildlife authorities, Schulz lost her coat.*

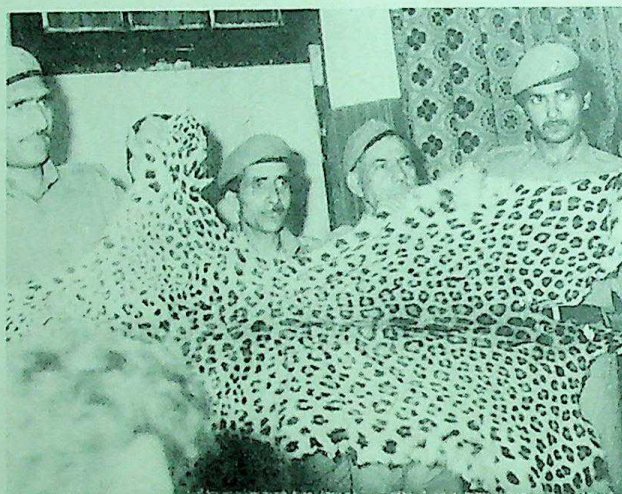
► *In the early hours of the morning, officials of the Delhi administration's wildlife branch, acting on a tip-off, swooped down on Khurana Goods Carrier's premises in Sadar Bazar. Their raid realised a consignment of 4,727 skins, mostly jackal, the biggest haul in the capital ever. The consignee, was one of the largest fur houses in Kashmir.*

► *In the Thar desert, professional trappers roam the area examining their crude traps for limp bodies of animals. They carry buckets of raw meat used to bait the traps. The animals are skinned and find their way to Srinagar's fur houses.*

AS THESE recent incidents indicate Kashmir's fur trade has suddenly started posing major problems for wildlife authorities throughout the country. The only state exempted from the ban imposed on the export of skins by the Central Government, Srinagar has become the major outlet for poachers throughout the country. The Chief Wildlife Warden, Mir Inayat Ullah, while admitting that this was true, said: "The problem lies in the fact that we cannot take any legal action against people bringing skins into the state. I myself seized 60,000 skins in a haul two years ago, but the court ruled in favour of the smugglers for the skins were from Rajasthan."

The problem started in 1972, when the Central Government passed the Wildlife (Preservation) Act. Applicable to all states, Jammu and Kashmir was the exception to the rule. Subsequently, the state Government passed its own Wildlife (Preservation) Act, which for all practical purposes was identical to the 1972 Act, but gave the state Government complete control over its wildlife. After India became a member of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1976, the export of skins was banned throughout the country, again with the exception of Jammu and Kashmir.

Following protests by the state Government, the Centre sent two officers of joint secretary rank from the Ministry of Agriculture to Srinagar to verify existing stock and give their recommendations. Based mainly on inflated figures given by the traders, the state was allowed to continue with the fur trade until its existing stocks were exhausted. That the two joint secretaries actually carried out a physical check during the three days while in Srinagar is unlikely. Later officials estimated that the state Government's figures were inflated nearly three times. In her report to the ministry, S.L. Singla, the then joint secretary (Agriculture, Cooper-



Police exhibit a seized leopard skin: ineffective curbs

atives & Trades), said: "A large number of workers (approximately 60,000) were engaged in the processing of hides and skins and the manufacture of garments for generations. Unless alternative employment was provided to them it would be very harsh to throw them out of job. Moreover, huge stocks of legally procured skins were lying with the traders and these had to be liquidated."

Uncontrollable Efforts: Unable to take any serious steps to control the fur trade, wildlife officials in Delhi are highly alarmed. Most fur houses export controlled animal skins under false names, in the hope that they would not be detected. Said a frustrated official connected with the export on animal skins in Delhi: "Of every one case that comes to our notice, a dozen get away. Besides, when we do intercept skins, the state Government does nothing. Besides, the Kashmir authorities are the people who issue the LPC's with the false names on them."

Inayat Ullah explains his government's position. "The scientific names we have used

on the LPC's have been given to me by the Centre. LPC's issued by me are only valid in Delhi, for based on our document the Centre has to issue another LPC." But no one tells the customer about this, and so far more than a dozen tourists have ever applied to the wildlife office in Delhi.

Judging from the official sale figures published in the CITES annual report in 1980, fur houses have sold a third of their deer stocks since 1978, thereby giving the trade a life of another 10 years, even though the figures themselves were far too exaggerated to be true. Jungle cat skins alone were sold in a number over 4 lakh when the stock was declared, and the sale figures on the other animals are deflated. The upshot is that jungle cats are being illegally slaughtered under a convenient cloak.

Banned Species: Already the Rajasthan state Government has been forced to declare the once abundant jackal an endangered animal. Inayat Ullah believes that Rajasthan's problem is its own making. Said he: "People kill jackals because they are vermin. What happens to the skin is a secondary issue. Why should I consider it to be a protected animal when it is vermin in my state?" What is happening to jungle cats and jackals is being done to such endangered and almost extinct species like the leopard and lynx. The clouded leopard, for example, is only found in the Northeast, and coats made from its pelts are as much as US \$1,000 in Srinagar.

While wildlife authorities in Delhi believe that the only remedy is in completely banning the trade in Kashmir. Inayat Ullah claims that stiff competition from China and the USSR has led to a recession in the fur trade in Kashmir. Talking about his own seizures, Inayat Ullah said: "Those skins are still lying rotting with maggots. The Centre, despite repeated requests, has not told me what to do with them. The action they take has to be a practical one. After my raids, my family and children are threatened by various traders—which life act protected them then?"

Whatever the solution, one thing emerges from the dismal situation—neither the Centre nor the state has the resources to keep a check on the fur trade under the present legal framework. Meanwhile, conservation efforts are unlikely to get any foothold unless a solution is arrived at quickly. Though the odd poacher does get caught, the bigger, more organised groups remain in the background. Quipped a senior wildlife official: "Maybe the original figure of people being employed by the fur trade is right; that is, if you include all the poachers in the country."

—KUNAL

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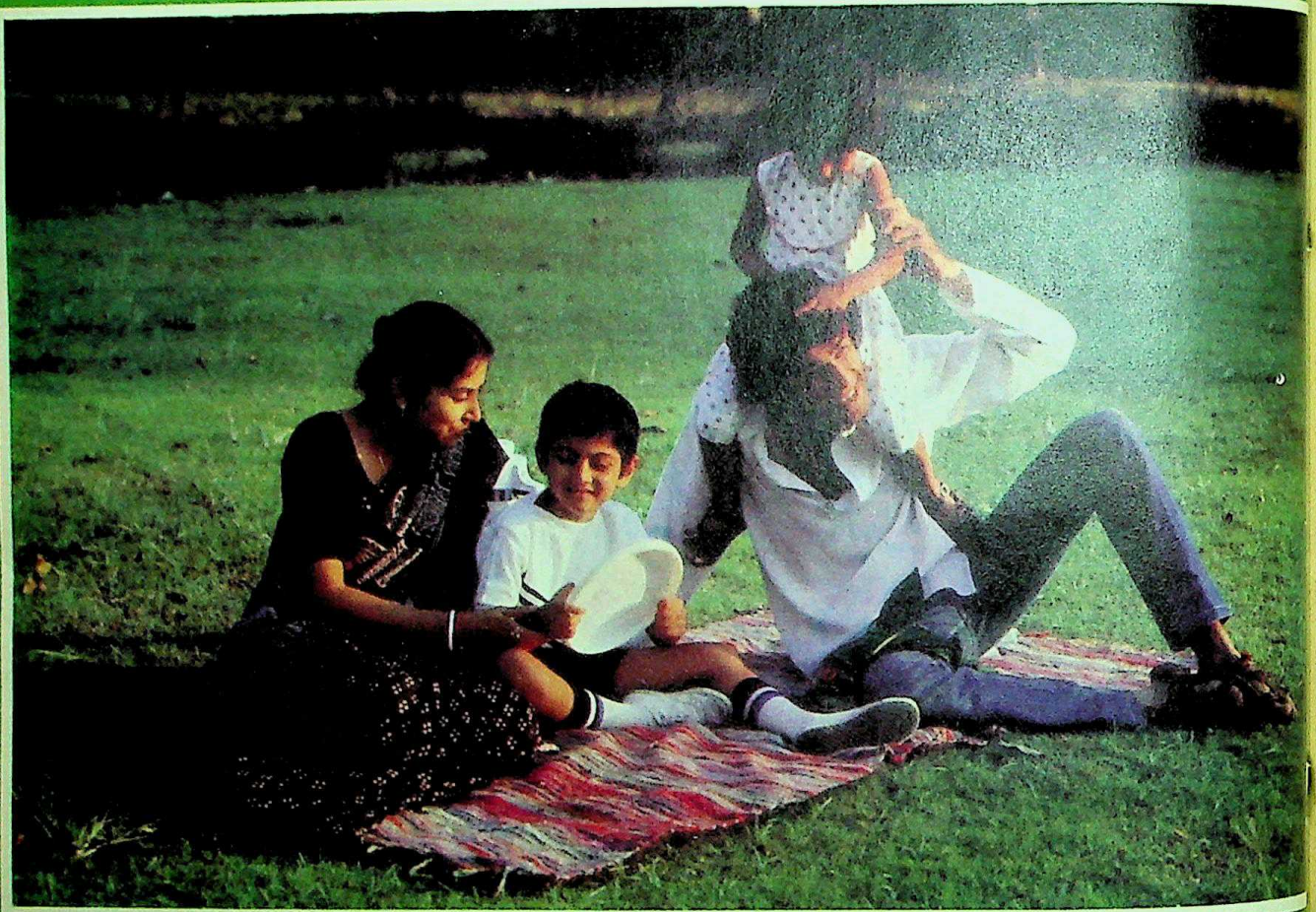
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	(Rs. per sq. m)	
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Hauz Khas	35	3000
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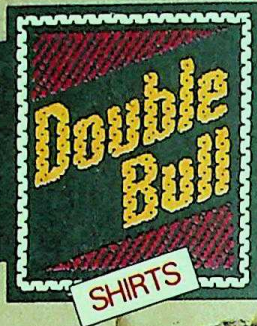
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THE SWRAJ STALEMATE

DESPITE denials from Swraj Paul, compromise moves have been made in an effort to sort out the issue concerning Paul's investments in Escorts and DCM shares. At least one industrialist from western India has taken on the role of mediator, though it is not clear whether this is on his own initiative or on the prompting of one of the principals. Others have also sounded out Paul's brothers in India on the possibility of a compromise being worked out. There is, however, no common ground that has been found yet. The mediators have been told that no offer to buy out his holdings is acceptable to Paul, no matter how attractive the price. He is willing to talk terms only after his shares are formally registered in the companies' books, and will probably insist on getting a couple of his nominees on the companies' boards. The companies continue to hold out against any such possibility, and recently rejected yet more shares that were lodged with them for transfer of ownership.

TOUGH STAND

THE Government has decided to get tough with Hindustan Aluminium Corporation (HINDALCO) regarding the pricing dispute which the company has taken to court. Moves are initiated to nationalise the company and then to place government nominees on the company's board of directors, using Section 8 of the Companies Act. Earlier, the Government had decided not to clear the company's application for increasing its captive power generating capacity pending a settlement of the dispute, which concerns the retention price fixed under the official pricing policy. The dias, who run the company, are now negotiating with the Government for an out of court settlement of the issue. So far, the Government has stuck to its stand that the company must first pay up the officially-calculated dues of roughly Rs 40 crore but the company has not yet capitulated, though a settlement may be worked out during the course of this month.

COSTLY DECISION

THE Government has started developing doubts about its decision some months ago to adopt the French company CIT Alcatel's technology for its electronic switching equipment factory due to come up in Bangalore. The contract had been awarded on the basis of proven technology, and without the financial bids being opened. It now turns out, however, that the French bid is more expensive than had been expected. Simultaneously, telecommunication engineers who had been unhappy at the adoption of what they considered slightly out-of-date technology have continued to make their opposition felt. While no drastic steps are immediately likely, some hard bargaining lies ahead on the bid made by CIT Alcatel. In an earlier case of a similar nature, Davy McKee lost its contract for the Daitari steel plant following a failure to agree on financial terms.

CHAIN REACTION

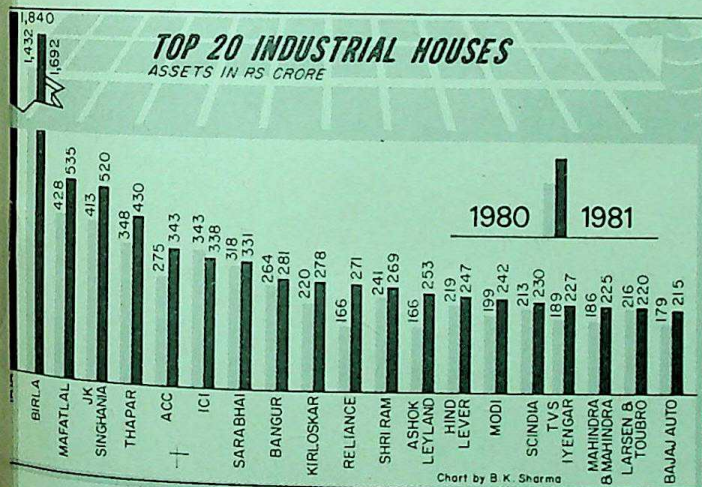
THE finance minister seems determined to push through a proposal to merge the two hotel chains in the public sector—the giant India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) and the smaller Hotel Corporation of India, which is at the moment a subsidiary of Air-India. The move was initiated early this year, following a review of public sector undertakings, and a decision taken to merge the two since they have overlapping functions and can save on overheads, promotion expenditure and other costs by functioning as a single entity. HCI has been opposing the move on the ground that it has a better international reputation, and does not therefore want to lose its identity in a much larger body. While the finance minister is keen on the merger, the Tourism Ministry feels Air-India should keep HCI.

DRAG RACE

THE country's cigarette manufacturers are girding for a new round of battle, using foreign cigarette brand names. With National Tobacco formally announcing its plans to lure Rothmans in India, rival companies have decided to try and follow suit. Godfrey Phillips, which had earlier been negotiating with Rothmans, is now trying to strike up a deal with Peter Stuyvesant, while Golden Tobacco has started negotiations for manufacturing Camel cigarettes in the country. ITC, the giant in the field, is taking a more circumspect course and checking out the possibility of reviving some of its defunct brand names that originally belonged to its parent company but to which it has proprietary claims. These include John Player and Players No. 3. The negotiations may, however, take time and the manufacturers plan to watch how National Tobacco fares with Rothmans and also wait for a revival of the slack cigarette market.

TOP 20 INDUSTRIAL HOUSES

ASSETS IN RS CRORE



CORPORATE CLIMBERS

THE large industrial houses are doing well for themselves. Figures recently released by the Government show that the top 20 industrial houses saw their total assets climb by a record 18.9 per cent in 1981—up from 16.8 per cent in 1980. The Birlas still head the list, with a 19.6 per cent growth, while the Birlas are in their second spot with an 18.2 per cent growth. But the more impressive performances come lower down in the list. Thus Reliance has made it to the top 20 for the first time, ranking 11th on the strength of a hefty 63.3 per cent increase. Ashok Leyland, ranking 12th, also figures in the list for the first time on the strength of a 53 per cent increase in assets. JK Singhania, Kirlokar, Mafatlal, ACC and Thapar have also turned in impressive performances with increases ranging from 23 to 26 per cent.

AID

Throwing Away The Crutches



THE DAY the World Bank was holding its crucial annual meeting in Washington, I was far away in Italy, travelling in a bus that was taking us across the spine of the country from Venice to Rome. I have done this journey only once before, about 30 years ago, when as a student I hitch-hiked all over Europe, covering mostly small towns and villages which were then beginning to recover from the after effects of a ruinous war. The route is one of the prettiest in Italy as it winds leisurely through the vineyards of Umbria and Perugia and over the hump of the Apennines and the pilgrim town of Assisi which is built around the relics of one of the kindest of Christian saints. We stopped at a number of the Italian equivalent of chateaux, chatting to farmers and their families who were obviously affluent and prosperous and glad to tell strangers about their good fortune. There was new housing in nearly every village we visited, complete with all modern conveniences, although there was little industry in the area. It was good farming country, the kind you come across in Sussex and Kent, England, and the kind that forms the backbone of rural France.

Thirty years ago, I recall seeing only old priests and widows, both dressed in black, moving about like ghosts in a ravaged land-

scape, ravaged not by war but by poverty. But in less than two generations the picture has changed. Italy is still a relatively poor country, but not as poor as it was 30 years ago when its per capita income could have been no more than about a third of Britain's. It is now more than three-quarters of Britain's (\$ 6,960 against Britain's \$9,110) and more than two-thirds of that of Japan, the richest country in Asia. In another ten years, Italy may catch up with Britain and edge closer to Japan. If anybody had said this in 1950, he would have been laughed out by most economists, including those who then worked for the World Bank.

The point I am trying to make is that there are no hard and fast rules in development. Countries go up and countries go down, leaving economists and others wondering why a particular country is surging forward and another barely limping along. Gunnar Myrdal who spent ten years writing his monumental *Asian Drama* said recently that he wished he had not written it. The book does not hold together any more. If a country like Italy can close its income gap with Britain, once the most powerful and possibly the richest country in the world in the span of a mere three decades, there is no reason why other so-called developing countries cannot do so. All advanced countries were backward at one time, just as all developed countries also started from scratch. No

country is born with a silver spoon in its mouth.

Exaggerated Image: When, therefore, agencies like the World Bank go around claiming, as its President A.W. Clausen at the Bank's annual meeting in Washington last month, that the world will come to an end—these were not his exact words but is what he tried to convey—if the world doesn't get its money, he is taking a necessarily alarmist position. For this reason, the World Bank has been built up as a principal engine of development, particularly in the poorer parts of the world, also rather exaggerated. Firstly, the Bank is just not big enough to be—and to do—what it is supposed to do. Last year (1982-83) the Bank approved \$11,136 million worth of loans, which is about Rs 11,000 crore, less than half of what we—the poorest country in the world—spent on our development projects as part of our own Sixth Five-Year Plan.

Unilever, not the largest company in the world, had a capital expenditure of Rs 1,000 crore last year. The World Bank's loan programme, assuming the whole of it represents capital expenditure, is thus only about one-tenth of that of Unilever. Although I do not have exact figures, I would not be surprised if the World Bank's capital expenditure is not more than one-tenth of that of Unilever.

GROWTH OF REAL GDP

COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (%)

		1960/1973	1973/1975	1975/1979	1979/1981	1981/1985
WORLD		5.5 %	1.5 %	4.4 %	2.1 %	4.0 %
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES		5.0 %	0.1 %	4.1 %	1.4 %	3.3 %
UNITED STATES		4.1 %	-1.1 %	4.5 %	1.1 %	3.0 %
JAPAN		10.4 %	0.5 %	6.0 %	4.0 %	5.0 %
EUROPE		4.8 %	0.7 %	3.4 %	0.6 %	3.0 %
W. GERMANY		4.5 %	-0.7 %	4.0 %	0.4 %	2.8 %
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES		6.1 %	4.1 %	5.7 %	4.3 %	5.8 %

Source: World Economic Outlook, Wharton

ESTIMATES

FORECAST

and that the top 10 or 15 corporations of the world would together have a larger capital expenditure programme than that of the World Bank. If, for some reasons, these corporations were to cut down on their plans to trim their capital budgets, the impacts on the world, or at least its organised sector, would be far greater than that caused by the cuts in the Bank's expenditure. I have a deep suspicion that the Americans know this—at least the US Government does—and are not therefore moved by the Bank's protestations which seem to find an easily sympathetic echo in the bureaucratizing of the Third World, including, of course, India.

Where, however, the Bank seems to have suddenly changed its course is in shifting the emphasis from trade to aid as the principal factor in development. Clausen is a banker—he had a long innings in private banking before he moved over to what is, for practical purposes, a government bank, headed and controlled by governments and the world—and I am really surprised that he should now speak more like a bureaucrat than a businessman. His address to the board of governors contains the following astonishing paragraph:

"A durable recovery in the industrial world, a rolling back of protectionist measures, and a revival of the earlier momentum of trade liberalisation will certainly help put world trade and economic growth back on the fast track. But they will not be enough to ensure that the developing countries regain the rate of growth they were previously attaining. The recession has wrought structural changes in patterns of world trade that are not to the advantage of the developing countries.... This means slower growth of developing countries' exports. Even though the developing countries can be expected to increase their share of world trade in coming years, the truth remains: trade alone never has generated, and never will generate, sufficient resources. The developing nations have always needed a steady flow of external capital. And today, if the momentum of development is to be recaptured, there must also be a substantial flow of foreign capital to the poorer nations."

Mark the sentence: Trade has never generated, and will never generate, sufficient resources. This is a very strong statement for which Clausen has cited no evidence, because, I am afraid, there is none. What the Bank is saying is that there can be no development without transfer of resources, other than the kind of transfer that takes place automatically through trade, that trade itself is not enough and you should transfer resources—capital, technology and so on—

through channels others than trade, and if you don't, the entire development process will come to a grinding halt. This is what the Brandt Report also said, not once but twice, though the impact of its second report was negligible. It is surprising to find the World Bank, particularly a bank presided over by a hard-headed businessman, falling into the same trap as Brandt, a socialist who, like most socialists, takes a statist view of the development process.

Growth Rates: Firstly, it is not really very clear whether the so-called North-South gap is growing. As the chart shows, up to 1973, development was even faster in the poorer countries than in the West and Japan. In 1973-79, the period following the first oil shock, growth rates in the developed world fell by nearly a half, while in the developing countries the growth rate was almost maintained. A very similar pattern is being experienced in the post-1979 period. Nor is it true, taking the developing world as a whole, that the growth of output has been offset by

The World Bank has been built up as if it were a saviour of the poorer countries. Its image, built sedulously over the years, as a principal engine of development, is also rather exaggerated.

rising population. World Bank estimates show that per capita gross domestic product has been rising faster than in industrialised countries since about 1970.

Secondly, like the Brandt Commission, the World Bank puts too much faith in the activities of governments and international institutions which are also government-controlled. It is dangerous that the development process throughout the world should be overseen by only one or two institutions, which means, in actual practice, by a handful of bureaucrats and experts, instead of exposing the process to the rigours of the market. Why should all the projects and technologies in the world be vetted by an official sitting in Washington or Geneva, just as all projects and technologies in India are vetted—and approved—by an official sitting in Delhi? To concentrate decision-making in one place or in one institution, and that too on a global basis, is not only economically counter-productive but can also be politically serious. For all international organisations are ultimately controlled by governments and their

officials—the World Bank too is a government agency—and the internationalisation of development activity can be as dangerous on a global scale as nationalisation is on the national scale. I have earlier criticised the Brandt Report for its undue emphasis on new international institutions—although one of its members, L.K. Jha, has argued, not too convincingly, that it is not so (INDIA TODAY, February 28), and I must say that the shift in the Bank's emphasis from trade to aid—it virtually rules out trade as a factor in development—is, for the same reason, both suspect and alarming.

Take the case of India. If there is any country that can do without aid, it is India. It has a high savings ratio, nearly as high as that of Japan, among the highest in the world, a large pool of competent and experienced managers and an equally large and growing skilled labour force, along with a proved capacity to absorb new technologies. What more can a country ask for? Its main weakness is the inability of its institutions to adjust themselves to changing situations, and an increasingly incompetent public sector—the same sector into which the World Bank would now pump more and more money—that seems to absorb resources as a vacuum cleaner sucks in dirt. A country that cannot use its resources properly can hardly be said to be lacking in resources. India does need access to new technologies but it can buy them on the open market just as Japan does. And the cost of purchase of new technology can be paid ten times over through exports, just as Japan does, if only it can learn how to do so. And this is something no bank in Washington or elsewhere can teach it to do.

Mrs Gandhi realises this, if nobody else in her government does. "When we are asking for help from the International Development Association (IDA) it is not for ever," she said in New York last month. "We shall gradually seek less and less and in about five years time we won't need any." She was being unnecessarily cautious by restricting herself to aid from IDA. If we can do away with aid from IDA in five years, we can certainly do away with total aid in ten. And if Mrs Gandhi cannot bring herself to say so, let someone else in the Government do it for her. Mrs Gandhi's bold statement is already being soft-pedalled by her bureaucrats in the South Block and elsewhere as some kind of an aberration, which, I am sure, it is not. It is a statement that should receive the widest publicity here and abroad as a firm indication on the part of India that it is flinging away its crutches for good and will soon stand on its own two feet. The statement is a sign of self-confidence and is worth a hundred World Bank loans. But I do hope she means it.

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"Will I be able to pay for her marriage?"

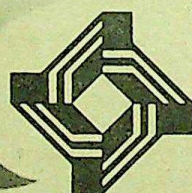
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TEXTILE MILLS

Striking Move

IT IS the special privilege of politicians and ministers to make statements which mean nothing." Thus spake R.L.N. Vijaynagar, secretary-general of the Mill Owners' Association (MOA) in mid-October. This typically acerbic response to Commerce Minister V.P. Singh's initial warning of a textile mill take-over proved a hopeless misjudgement.

Vijaynagar had to swallow his vitriol last fortnight. Then in a swift pre-dawn move, officials of the state-owned National Textile Corporation (NTC), accompanied by policemen and armed with a presidential take-over ordinance, swooped on the offices and plants of the mills in the city, seized account books and records, and formally took control of the companies.

By noon that day, October 20, the 123-year-old offices of the MOA were the scene of frenzied discussions in gloomy huddles, as dispossessed mill owners and representatives of the association tried to work out a last-ditch line of defence. The consensus that emerged was that soon enough when, a day later, Elphinstone Mills

pleaded the Bombay High Court in a bid to have the take-over ordinance struck down as constitutionally motivated and mala fide. Within hours, there was a procession to the courts as owners of Jam, Sitaram, Finlay, Gold Mohur and others followed Elphinstone.

These moves were accompanied by an escalating war of words that marked a sharp change in what had been an increasingly friendly relationship between government and industry. Reacting bitterly to the first take-over decision since the nationalisation of six banks in mid-1980, textile magnates termed the move retrograde, post-hoc, contrary to numerous official statements on the subject of nationalisation, and an unfair price that they were being made to pay for cooperating with the Government in ending the 18-month strike in 60 mills.

Necessary Move: Commerce Minister V.P. Singh, who had earlier confided in private that he was opposed to the take-over move, angrily in defence of the Government's action, hit out at the press for being critical

of the move to save workers' jobs and said: "If being on the side of the worker is populist, we have no hesitation in being populist." Coming down even more heavily on the textile magnates for their "sham and hypocrisy", he said that every one of the 110 mills that had been nationalised earlier was "a

monument to the failure of the private sector", and that if industry objected to the use of public funds to prop up ailing units, then it should not run to the Government for help in running jute mills and numerous other ailing industries.

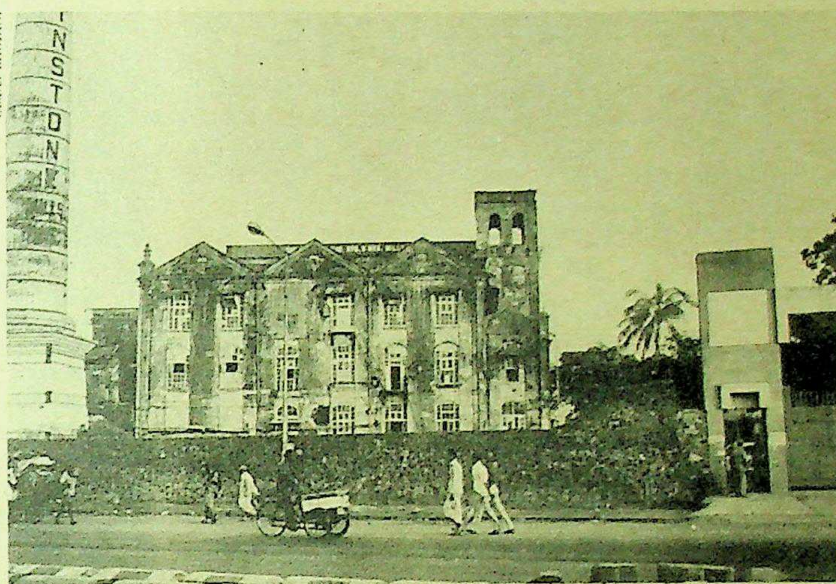
Amid the din of charges, counter-charges and condemnations, the most obvious point about the take-over was its timing. The All-India Congress Committee (I) was beginning its session in Bombay, and the Government's action was clearly timed to wrest the

maximum possible political mileage in a city where 2.5 lakh textile workers and their families had been alienated by a crippling 18-month strike led by Datta Samant. With over half a million votes at stake, local Congressmen had stressed upon Mrs Gandhi the impossibility of holding on to the city politically, either in a parliamentary poll or in the more immediate municipal elections due in early 1984. And since the mills still recovering from the aftermath of the strike, had not taken back 36,000 permanent workers and an estimated 40,000 temporary 'badli' employees, this was clearly a vital local issue. As a dispossessed mill owner said, "I doubt if the mills would have been taken over if the AICC(I) session was being held somewhere else. The Government's one-point

programme was to make the session a success. Everything else is an afterthought."

That isn't strictly true. The Government had other good reasons as well, one of them being the need to restore some credibility to the Congress(I) affiliated Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) which had backed the mill owners on the strike issue, and even agreed during the strike period to numerous "rationalisation" agreements that cut employment in the industry by roughly 8 per cent. When Samant first called for nationalisation, the Government had turned a deaf ear. But when the RMMS recently performed an abrupt volte face and demanded a take-over, the Government promptly obliged.

Mismanagement: In a letter to Mrs Gandhi on October 8, RMMS General Secretary Haribhau Naik had charged the mill management with both mismanagement and malpractices. The Mulji family, which ran Finlay and Gold Mohur, "has misused Rs 6 crore belonging to workers on account of provident fund, ESIS, LIC, gratuity, postal sa-



The Elphinstone Mills: war of words

The most obvious thing about the take-over was its timing. The AICC(I) was beginning its session in Bombay and the Government's action was clearly timed to wrest the maximum political mileage.



Vijaynagar: dismayed

vings, unpaid leave and unpaid wages and salaries," the letter stated, and added that only 850 of the mills' 8,000 workers had been re-employed. Naik went on to charge Podar Mills with not paying Rs 5 lakh to the workers' cooperative credit society and statutory bonus for 1981, Jam Mills with "forcing its workers to work 12 hours a day", and Elphinstone Mills with holding up Rs 48 lakh due to the workers and refusing to employ a quarter of its 2,122 workers.

Vijaynagar of the MOA tries to explain these away rather than refute the allegations. "Technically it is correct to say that mill owners have diverted workers' funds by not depositing provident fund deductions and other statutory dues with the Government. But you have to understand that owing to factors like the strike, which are outside their control, they have a cash shortage. This means that they have to juggle and delay various payments just to keep the mill running."

Doubtful Motive: But the unionists are not convinced, and RMMS Joint General Secretary Manohar Phalke said: "The main thing is that the motives and purpose of these mill owners are not clean. They all want to close their mills down and sell the land, so that they can divert the huge sums they will earn. In Antulay's time Sitaram and Tata Mills were given permission to sell land so that they become viable, but they did not plough any of that money back into the companies and instead diverted it."

This was a direct attack on what the mill owners had been asking for: permission to sell their vast surplus lands in the city and to use the cash to revive the mills, some of which were proposed to be moved out of the city. The mills had also asked for excise duty reductions, and soft loan funds to help revive the units. The Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) had estimated that it would need Rs 140 crore to wipe out losses and place the units on even keel once again.

The question was whether this vast sum was to be given to industrialists under whose charge the mills had fallen sick in the first place, or whether the Government should take on the responsibility of properly spending public funds. Influential Bombay Congressmen had also impressed upon Mrs Gandhi that private mill owners should not be allowed to get away with the profits flowing from the city's land value appreciation.

In finally deciding on a take-over, the Government inevitably focused attention on the performance of the 110 mills that have

already been nationalised and brought under the umbrella of the public sector NTC, as also on the numerous inconsistencies in the selection of mills to be taken over.

Poor Record: Although Singh made a brave effort at a press conference to defend the record of the NTC, pointing to increased productivity, there is in fact precious little to commend in its performance. The mills suffered a staggering loss of Rs 100 crore in 1982-83, on top of Rs 104 crore the previous year, and the total since nationalisation has mounted to Rs 450 crore. The corporation's record on rehabilitation of the mills is no better. Roughly Rs 320 crore was due to have been spent on this, but in six years to 1980 no more than Rs 100 crore had in fact been provided by the Government. The pace of investment has picked up since then, mostly because of IDBI funding, but the corporation's mounting losses indicate that this has had little result. Indeed, so great is the priority given by the Government to NTC that the corporation has neither a full-time chairman nor managing director. The obvious question was inevitably asked by mill owners: why take on additional responsibilities, without first proving that the Government has the will and the ability to revive sick textile mills?



Datta Samant: critical

The dispossessed mill owners were also pointing to other aspects of the Government's midnight blow: mills that had been put on the list of those needing urgent action (like Bradbury) had been spared, while others that had been doing reasonably well and hoped to effect a recovery under the existing managements had been taken over. Said Ratansi Mulji, chairman of Finlay and Gold Mohur: "It is difficult to understand what the justification for the take-over was. Both our mills were profit-making before the strike, and both had the potential to wipe out the accumulated losses. It was completely arbitrary and we intend to challenge this move of the Government."

Elphinstone director B.K. Jalan insisted likewise that the Government had no grounds for take-over. "My mill was working to 90 per cent of capacity."

Uncertain Future: While inconsistencies such as this were certain to be used by the mills in fighting their legal battles, the hastiness of official action showed in the confusion over the next step. Minister Singh first announced that a separate textile corporation would be formed to take care of the newly taken over mills; but very quickly

TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Powerful Competition

IS THE textile industry in decline? The answer could well be yes. And the reason? Increasing competition from the lakhs of powerlooms that have sprung up in numerous small towns in western and southern India.

In the last 11 years, the textile mills have seen their total production fall from 3,957 million metres to 2,357 million metres. At the same time, powerloom production has surged from 3,399 million to 5,441 million metres. This trend has been further aggravated this year. Between January and June, the textile mills are estimated to have produced less than 1,400 million metres of cloth, while the powerlooms turned out 3,500 million metres.

Inevitably, the mills are falling sick and closing down. While the problems of the mills have been well publicised following the prolonged strike, the mills in Ahmedabad, Datta Samant, the mills in Ahmedabad are faring no better. Of the 62 mills in the city, six have closed down in the last year-and-a-half, and the Ahmedabad Textile Mills Association (ATMA) estimates that 15 others could follow suit if the situation improves. At least 10 of these suffered losses ranging from Rs 1 crore to Rs 5 crore last year, and many workers have already been thrown out of their jobs.

Flourishing Mills: In contrast to the powerlooms are flourishing. In towns like Bhiwandi, Ichalkaranji, Bombay, Dabod, Surat, Coimbatore, Bangalore and elsewhere, the number of powerlooms is estimated to have grown from 3.29 lakh in 1977-78 to almost 5 lakh last year. In 1982-83 alone, the number jumped by a lakh. While the Government estimates that there are another 10 lakh unauthorised powerlooms in operation, industrial and trade circles put the figure at four lakh—making for a possible 14 million powerlooms. Says Sudhir Datta, former general manager of Ambica Mills: "The fact that powerlooms have taken over the textile business has become obvious. I saw the trend some time back and saw the mill."

A number of factors have contributed to this trend. To start with, the excise differential: while an authorised textile mill has to pay 40 paise per

metre on grey cloth, a powerloom is charged no more than 8 paise if the cloth is going to be hand-processed.

Labour costs are a second contributory factor. The worker in a mill gets on average Rs 35 per day, while a powerloom worker is often paid as little as Rs 10. There are other cost advantages too, in terms of lower overheads, so that a powerloom can market a metre of printed cotton cloth for Rs 5, whereas the mill cannot offer it for less than Rs 6.25. Asks Girish Bhagvat Prasad, managing director of Prasad Mills, which till last year suffered accumulated losses of Rs 52.45 lakh: "Why should any consumer pay more for mill-produced cloth when he has a cheaper alternative?" The powerlooms are throwing us out of business."

confidence of the cloth market." Even an official of the public sector National Textile Corporation (NTC) concedes that "only laboratory tests can tell the difference".

Sophisticated Technology: This is partly because of crucial technological changes. While the majority of integrated textile mills have failed to modernise and invest in the latest machinery, many powerloom operators have done just that, and have gone in for costly and sophisticated shuttleless looms. Points out S.K. Datta, branch manager of Mafatlal Engineering Industries, which manufactures textile machinery: "Powerloom units are buying sophisticated machinery to ensure speed and quality. It is ironic, but the textile mills have little money to buy the same machines."

chain and contributing further to cost advantage. The advent of the powerlooms has also been helped by the fact that brand names do not hold sway in the same way as they did earlier.

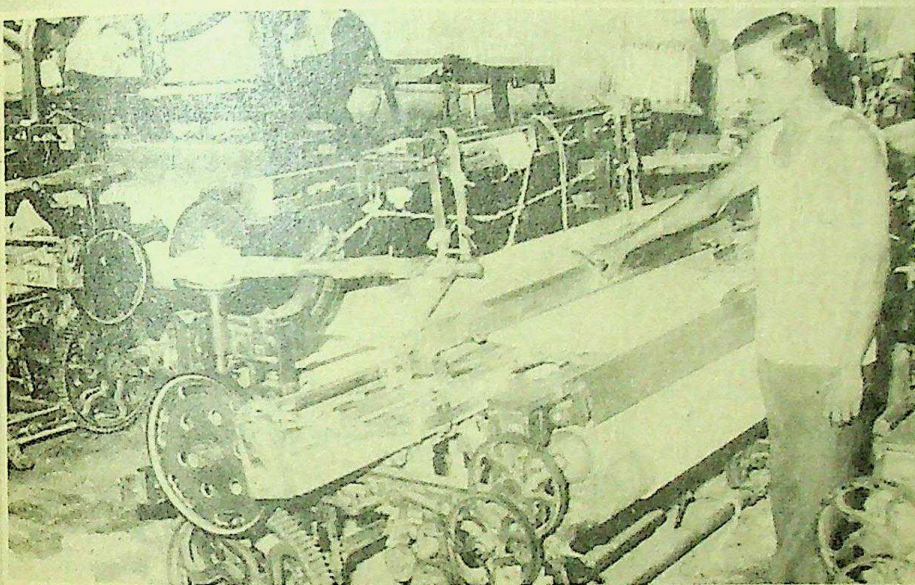
Across the industry now, millowners speak in tones of depression and gloom. Prafulbhai Anubhai, managing director of Rustom Mills, warns that "at the rate at which powerlooms are flourishing, composite mills will not be able to survive". And Mrugesh Harivallabhdas, another leading magnate, says: "The textile industry has been upstaged by the powerloom sector. For the organised mills, the sunny days are over."

Tax Concessions: Nevertheless, efforts are being made to even the scales by appealing to the Government for help. Rajnikant Nagri, president of the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, says: "The Government will have to give heavy concessions for importing textile machinery if the industry is to be bailed out of the current crisis." And ATMA argues that excise duty on cloth should be shifted to the fibre stage so that tax evasion by the powerlooms is stopped. Two months ago, the Indian Cotton Mills Federation (ICMF) handed in a paper to the Government arguing that excise evasion by the powerlooms now amounted to Rs 80 crore. But Rasikbhai Modi, vice-president of the Maskati Cloth Merchants Association, counters these arguments. "Why should powerloom operators evade tax? After all it is minimal, and they earn more than some textile mills."

In fact, numerous mills have resorted to cutting corners, liberally indulging in faulty stampings, indicating wrong percentages of cotton-synthetic blends, in order to get away with a lower tax. Many mills have set up their own powerloom and processing units, and others give out yarn and take back processed cloth, which is then stamped with the mill name. N.K. Dalal, commercial director of the Gujarat unit of the NTC, is in no doubt of the future trend. "With powerlooms growing like this, the composite mills are on their way out. Soon independent units separately conducting the operations of spinning, weaving and processing will take over as only they will be financially viable." R. Rajagopal, spinning master in a composite mill, agrees: "One of the crucial ways out is for mills to start selling yarn instead of fabric."

This picture could be overdrawn. After all, the majority of textile units continue to be viable entities. But there is little doubt that the powerloom boom spells doom for all too many of the mills still in business

—RAMESH MENON



A powerloom in operation: lucrative business

The powerlooms have also been helped along by factors other than cost. As Manipal Dalal, a leading agent, points out, "Powerlooms can easily bend to fast changing demands and fashions." Then the prolonged strike in the Bombay mills was a fortuitous godsend and caused something of a vacuum in the market, which the powerlooms were quick to exploit. Labour was available for the asking as unemployed textile workers and technicians signed up. The mills themselves subcontracted their orders to the powerlooms, and then marketed the cloth under their own names. This helped cross a major confidence chasm, because the powerlooms could now claim legitimately that their cloth was as good as that produced by the mills. Says Jashwant P. Shah, who runs over 200 powerlooms in Ahmedabad: "The powerloom cloth is as good as any mill cloth, it has won the con-

fidence of the cloth market. The powerloom boom has also crippled the handloom weavers. L.C. Jain, an industrial consultant who has conducted a study on the subject, estimates that the rapid growth of powerlooms has rendered 14 lakh handlooms idle—and cost almost three million jobs as a result. Clearly, of the three major sectors of the cotton textile industry—composite mills, powerlooms and handlooms—only powerlooms are prospering and eating up the other two sectors' share.

The wise guys in the industry and trade have read the writing on the wall; and numerous textile magnates as well as wholesalers and cloth merchants have jumped on to the bandwagon. A round of the Maskati cloth market in Ahmedabad confirms the trend, and numerous merchants who have gone into powerloom operations now sell their own cloth—thus eliminating one step in the marketing

there was another proposal to bring the mills under the NTC umbrella, while Singh himself talked vaguely of workers' cooperatives being formed once the mills were formally nationalised. At fortnight end, while Singh was huddled in confabulations with his senior civil servants, working out the subsequent steps, NTC chairman A.H. Mehta confessed when contacted that he did not know anything about the matter.

Calculations made show, however, that the Government may be able to get away with little investment from its own coffers by selling the mills' surplus land and using the proceeds to invest in rehabilitation. The IDBI estimates that the mills need Rs 140 crore to wipe out the accumulated losses of Rs 120 crore and to invest in new machinery and facilities, while the surplus land with the mills is valued at Rs 156 crore. But this will entail a formal decision to sell the surplus land, even perhaps the more drastic decision to move the mills out of Bombay altogether. This last was one of the options being considered by the Government, though officials were cagey about disclosing it for fear that this would once again bring Datta Samant on their heads. Clearly, a final decision on how exactly to rehabilitate the sick mills was going to be a decidedly tricky business.

But Singh now showed no signs of his earlier reluctance to take over sick textile mills. Obviously stung by the criticism of the move as a political stunt, he conceded that its timing was not a coincidence but went on to hold out the warning that four more sick mills in the city may also be taken over, while an official team had been despatched to Ahmedabad to take a look at the six textile mills lying closed there. Meanwhile, from the south, there were calls for a similar take over of seven mills that were under lock and key there. Clearly, the Bombay decision had touched off a wave of competitive calls from trade union spokesmen for nationalising other sick units. And the Government was up face to face against the economic logic of its humanitarian argument that public money should be spent to save workers' jobs, even if this meant trying to prop up units that were intrinsically not viable.

In the final analysis, the Government had side-stepped the cold logic of a situation where it would have to choose between trying to preserve existing jobs in ailing units or creating new jobs in fresh healthy ventures. In opting for a take-over, the Government had merely taken on itself the responsibility that has all this while lain on the shoulders of private industrialists, of supporting sick units.

—T.N. NINAN and CHANDER
UDAY SINGH

VITTAL MALLYA

Passing On

HE DIED as he had lived, on the go. A restless nomad whose normal monthly schedule involved at least 10 inter-city and sometimes inter-continental hops, Vittal Mallya at 59 maintained the same tireless pace which had helped him build a massive industrial empire from scratch in just 35 years. Just back from escorting a group of British collaborators to Nepal's Tiger Tops, and en route to Goa for a brief business vacation with other collaborators before he got back to the blistering schedule of almost daily board meetings for the more than 40 companies in his group, Mallya was attending a Cathay Pacific Airlines cocktail party in Bombay's Taj Mahal Hotel when he suffered a massive cardiac arrest which resulted in instant death.

Mallya left behind a reputation for having been among the country's most formidable financial brains, among its most successful first generation industrialists, and certainly one of its most feared corporate predators. His powerful and highly diversified business empire had an estimated turnover last year of Rs 350 crore, and included the largest distillery and brewery group, leading food brands like Kissan and Dipy's, major interests in the pharmaceutical industry (Hoechst and Roussel), plus battery units, soft drinks companies, plastics and paints operations.

He was also at the helm of affairs of Hindustan Cocoa Products (Cadbury) and Indian Sewing Machines Company (Singer), and was in the process of pushing through hotly contested acquisitions of Spencers, the hotel and consumer goods marketing conglomerate, and cosmetics producer J.L. Morison Son and Jones, as well as the engineering company Uhde Ltd.

Smooth Transition: Reclusive by nature, and sometimes referred to as India's Howard Hughes, Mallya may have anticipated a sudden end (he had been a heart patient for 20 years), for he had ordered his affairs to ensure a smooth transition to his only son, Vijay, 28. Soon after his father's death on October 13, Vijay was invited to the board of United Breweries, the group's main holding company, and elected chairman right after. "The transition has already been completed

and I have been elected chairman of United Breweries," Vijay said last fortnight from the group's Bangalore headquarters. "Everything was planned by my father down to the last detail, and there is no question of anything but a smooth transition."

Nevertheless, the shift from one generation to the next will involve substantial changes, of both style and substance. Like his father, Vijay is a flamboyant bachelor with a taste for fast cars and a formula car racer who won the last race in Sholavaram, Vijay clearly enjoys the limelight. Father Vittal was happy in Bombay with using a chair in the Hoechst office, a friend and boardroom colleague Divecha. But Vijay's first action on taking over the McDowell management was to revamp the company's offices in Bombay in a flashy, neo-American style.

New Plan: Vijay

at the moment unwilling to discuss his status in companies like Cadbury, Ismaco, in which his father was chairman, a marginal shareholder. "It is a little premature to talk of that," he said. In Mallya's own companies, substantive changes were quickly under way. As if to prove that he was now in charge, he mapped out a plan for reorganising the group on modern management lines, superseding the dual company operation to coordinate different

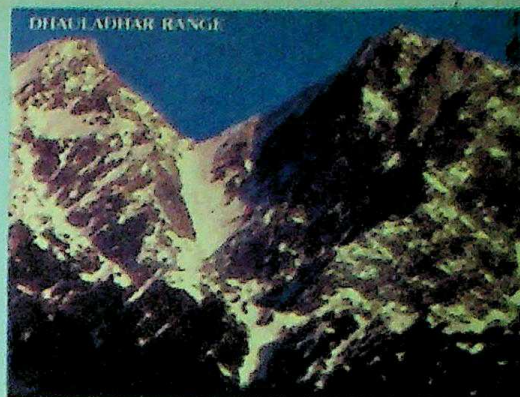


Mallya (right) and son Vijay: change of style

products under over-all corporate chief executives for each product line. Vijay declared, meanwhile, that "we are going steam ahead with his (Vittal's) plans and ideals. Acquisition and growth will place at the same pace if not faster than before."

Does the 28-year-old have it in him to do that? Despite having been exposed to most companies in the group, his record is not an unmixed success. Although he single-handedly ran McDowell in India, a springboard for the group's overseas operations, his highly-publicised venture into carbonated drinks in the domestic market has been a virtual disaster. But senior executives insist that this is only a temporary setback in what will eventually prove to be a profitable venture. Divecha argues that Vijay is a capable manager who will command total control of the group. Says he: "He is a very strong, effective manager, and there is just no doubt that he has the capability to manage the group."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH



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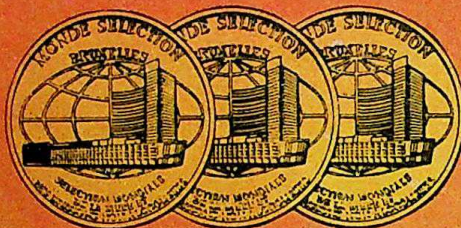


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BUSINESS

MUSSOORIE

Building Bonanza

DUNDER of forests, quarrying and road-building have for decades been changing the face of the gentle outer Himalayan slopes around Mussoorie. But, suddenly, a new dimension has been added. The hill-town's skyline is undergoing a rapid transformation and the species responsible is one other than the ubiquitous Delhi coloniser.

The change hits the traveller the minute he climbs into the town, skirting the debris falling from the hillside to the right, crumbling under the weight of a gauche 11-storey structure that looks like a cross between a Bombay chawl and a massive Tibetan seminary. There are others too around the Mall that resemble police barracks. And all along the 31-km drive from Dehra Dun the hillside is festooned with colourful hoardings promising "luxurious, compact" flats with modern amenities and, among the many other attractions, a "panasonic view".

That little slip can perhaps be dismissed as a none-too-literate signboard painter's innocent indiscretion. But it is different with the half-a-dozen Delhi colonisers and builders who are now busy building nearly a thousand tiny, multi-storey apartments in Mussoorie and palming these off to buyers from over the country, and even abroad, who seem to have the old princes' craving for maintaining summer-houses. And even if they lack the princely style they seem to have at least as much money to spare. The Mussoorie flats, dingy, dark and depressingly cramped, are selling at over Rs 300 a square foot. Says Ashok Verma, "In the last five years, property prices have gone up 20 to 30 times."

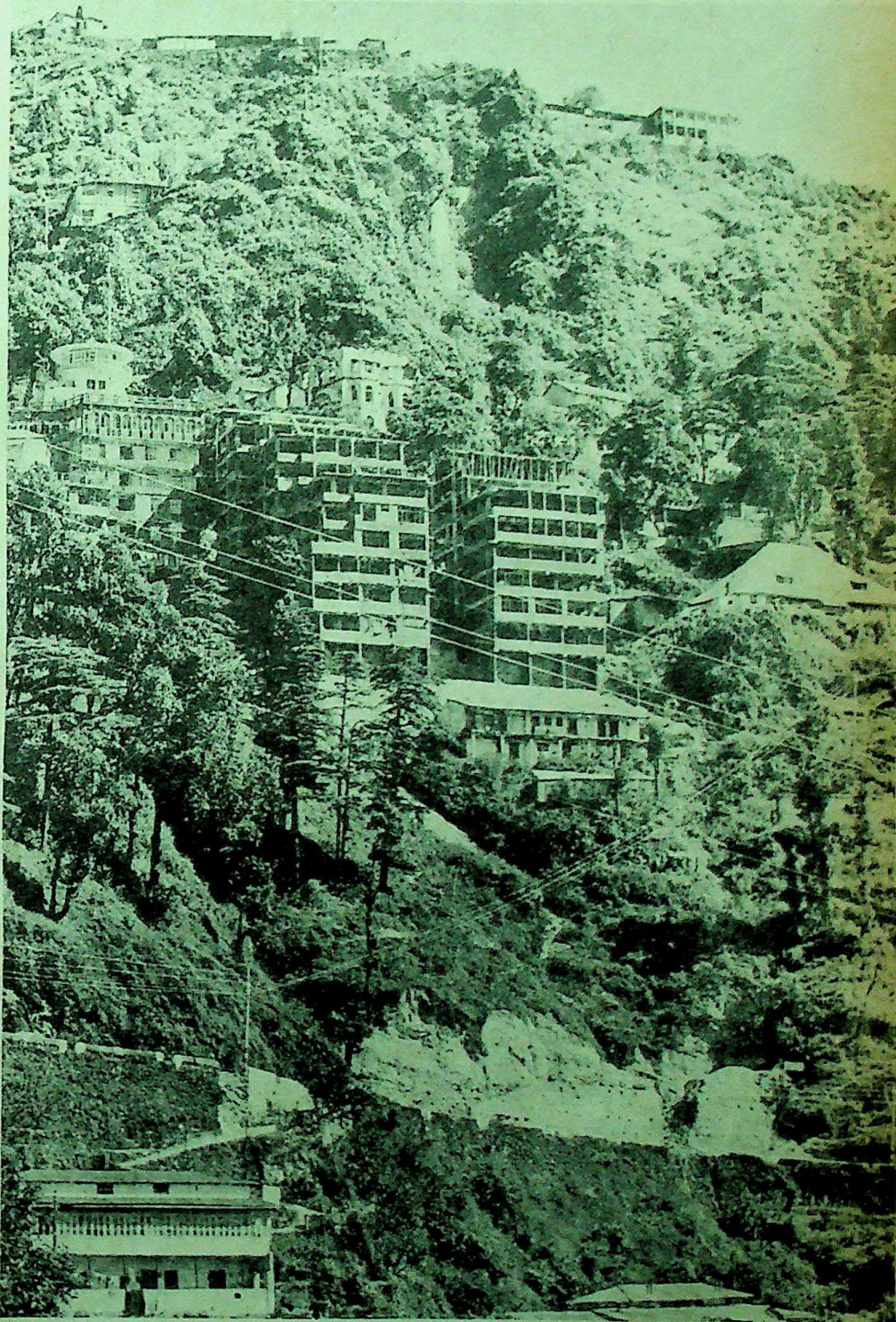
Profitable Venture: According to current sanctioned plans, almost 3.5 lakh square feet of built up area will come up in Mussoorie worth around Rs 10 crore. 425 flats under various stages of completion along the Mall and near the Landaur Bazar have already been sold. Said Ajit Singh Oberoi, proprietor of the Hemkunt Builders responsible for putting up the imposing, 11-storey structure on the Mall: "The profits, frankly, are not poor." This could be an understatement.

This revolution of sorts began a couple of years back as builders who found the going increasingly difficult in Delhi in the wake of the Asiad boom turned to Mussoorie. The first venture, of V.K. Mago, was an instant success and the colonisers say the list of the buyers reads like the who's who of the richest in the capital's business world. Said Oberoi: "Flats have been purchased by transporters, exporters and medical

practitioners. There are also many well-known politicians among the buyers." But, like the other builders, he would not disclose any names.

But what baffles even the pundits in real estate business is the enthusiasm which the buyers have shown for these small, badly-

planned flats which hardly conform to the traditional concept of a summer holiday in a hill resort. Said Anand Jauhar, proprietor of Mussoorie's massive, 1910-vintage Savoy Hotel: "Here people are pumping lakhs into flats from which they will hardly ever see the sun." Added Maisie Gantzer, a resident of Mussoorie for 43 years and secretary of the Save Mussoorie Society which resents the colonisation: "Just look at those black *ka-butarkhanas* (pigeon-holes). I will not even tie a blessed poor old cow out there." The



The Mall embankment crumbles under new apartment blocks: cramped life

builders have hardly bothered about ventilation, sunlight or hygiene. Said local businessman Prem Thadani: "I can't understand why people would want to buy chawls in Mussoorie."

Residents' Resistance: The answer comes from the builders, even if rather unconvinced. Said a representative of the M.S. Builders, constructing the largest flat-cottage complex in Landaur: "There are many who have been coming to Mussoorie for long holidays every summer. With the hotel tariffs going up steeply it will now work out cheaper for them to maintain self-contained flats round the year. Also, when they are not in Mussoorie they can lend the flats to relatives and friends." But the common talk in Mussoorie is that the flats will be used by businessmen to oblige government officers and clients with free holidays in Mussoorie; that will be safe too since they would not have to check into a hotel and leave any record of their indiscretions.

There will be other problems. Says



Gantzer (left) and Thadani:
feeling threatened

Dehra Dun District Magistrate Surjit Das, in whose jurisdiction the hill-station lies: "Mussoorie has an acute shortage of water in the tourist season. I am not sure how they are going to cope with the sudden population pressure." Gantzer was more eloquent: "We have no water in summer. There is very little electricity and our sewerage system is on the bursting point. The colonisers will finish this town."

The builders, however, point to the fact that all their building plans have been okayed by the officials of the electricity, water supply and health departments.

Violated Laws: In any case, this is only part of the story. Most residents of Mussoorie and even the district officials say the buildings are coming up in violation of the municipal by-laws which were drafted nearly 70 years ago basically with the intention of preserving Mussoorie's attractive hill resort character. There is, for example, a by-law that no building in Mussoorie can be more than 60 ft high and have more than four storeys. But the Hemkunt Apartments are spread over seven floors though within the stipulated limit of 60 ft. Says SDM Ashok

Verma: "The permission was given for six floors before I came and I don't know why. When they began constructing the seventh I served a notice for demolition. But they have obtained stay from a court." Hemkunt Builders, however, say that their plans were indeed sanctioned for seven floors and have attested maps to substantiate the claim. What worries the old residents of Mussoorie and the Save Mussoorie Society is the fact that the building will block out the view of the Doon Valley even though there is a clear law stating that any building on the Doon side of the Mall should be 10 ft below the road.

Hukum Singh Pawar, a lawyer and former president of the City Board, feels it would be unfair to blame the colonisers alone since even the Government is violating the same laws by constructing a tourist complex which rises above the level of the Mall. The residents talk of the tearing rush in which the Government, in a space of a fortnight in September 1981, okayed several of the eight proposals for multistorey constructions hanging fire for a long time—all, on the eve of the Garhwal parliamentary by-election.

Inadequate Precautions: Old residents also fear that the new buildings have been constructed without adequate precautions and constitute a safety hazard. Says Thadani: "The question is will these one-brick structures survive the elements for even a decade?" Admitted SDM Verma: "We have had problems with the Hemkunt building. It has been causing landslides and blocking the section of the road underneath."

He has now summoned experts from Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee, and geologists to conduct soil tests and study the design of the new buildings from the point of view of safety. Oberoi asserts that his building was designed by CBRI experts. He says, he has already filed a complaint with the chief judicial magistrate's court seeking action under Section 420 IPC against a group of builders which has advertised the flats wrongly claiming that the plans have been sanctioned.

But there is a sense of resignation in the way the old Mussoorie loyalists accept the inevitability of the builders getting the better of the pressure from them and the Government. So confident are the builders that they are now merrily expanding the business to other hill-stations and the real estate journals published in Delhi have already begun writing about the "Paradise Apartments" in Simla, another hill-station starving for water and other civic amenities. The faithfuls of the tradition will shout but there will be no stopping the builders, their colonising hunger whetted in Mussoorie.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Mussoorie

PHOTOGRAPHY

Shutter Happ

FOR A market which has remained sluggish and unsophisticated for two decades of intense development world-wide, India's photographic equipment bazar has shown surprising signs of boom of late. New cameras have popped up with increasing regularity in the last months, periodicals and cinema magazines have sported an alluring array of advertisement plugs for everything from fancy amateur cameras to superfast colour-process laboratories, and the price war between photographic print-makers trying to outdo another with attractive discounts has not only seasoned photography enthusiasts but also increasingly the vast number of eager-to-learn novices in every major city in the country.

Said Photophone chief executive Abdullah Fazalbhoy, whose 'Hot Shot' line of cameras has become a household name in metropolitan centres after an eight-month publicity blitz: "When we decided to launch our cameras in March there was no show that it could be such a big market. Surveys, our dealers all told us not to do it; but we had a gut feeling it would. And the response was really exciting. We were stocked out within days, and in the next few months we had orders for everything we could produce." The sudden increase in consumer demand extends to rival camera manufacturer Agfa-Gevaert, and to a lesser extent to new entrants Visions of Ahmedabad and Calcutta's state-of-the-art National Instruments. All of them introduced sophisticated new automatic cameras to amateurs within weeks of each other. Market reports indicate that they have made hay in a market starved for cameras.

Boom Times: Spiralling upwards, total annual sales of roughly 1.5 lakh cameras—of which the cheaply priced but popular Agfa Click III constituted over half—and smuggled Kodak Instamatics and other brands an estimated 50,000—sales of four new brands and their seven streamlined models are expected to push the total to almost three lakh pieces. Spurred mainly by the heavily advertised entry of the easy-to-use "110 Format" cartridge camera last March, the photographic equipment boom was given added impetus by the reduction in film prices, colour processing and printing charges, which coincided with increased camera availability.

In just six months processing costs have dropped 25 per cent from Rs 20 per roll, and printing cost from a high of Rs 1.50 for a postcard print to Rs 3.50. Last for



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In today's business world you must put time aside to slow yourself down.

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Here, as you stretch out in an area roomier than you imagined, decisions are deliberated at your leisure.

It's your prerogative to change your mind over the choice of drink, or whether to have Lobster Newburg, Rib Eye Steak or Szechuan Fried Fish.

It doesn't matter that those extra documents made your luggage heavy. Our Business Class allowance is thirty kilos.

And it was good to find that we reserved your favourite seat when your secretary booked the ticket. And that our Premium Accommodation Plan service has your hotel confirmed well ahead.

But from this height, as you leisurely consider another brandy offered by our gentle hostesses in sarong kebayas, any problems on the ground are starting to look a little insignificant, if not invisible, aren't they?

SINGAPORE AIRLINES

BUSINESS CLASS





A whisper of blue...

*Luxol Silk Whispering Whites ...
now Silk whispers in a language that
speaks of your subtle ideas in decor.*

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Whites with a whisper of blue ...
or pink or yellow or green — and
the silken, super-smooth finish that
only the richest emulsion in the world
can offer!*

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Silk**

Whispering Whites



Now, drape your walls with Silk that whispers.



Harvest Tones...
from the exclusive collection of Transasia —
the fashion house of carpets



TransAsia Carpets

In collaboration with Besmer of West Germany



NANAS BUDJANI

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman standing in front of a backdrop. The woman, on the left, has long dark hair and is wearing a light-colored, low-cut top and a dark skirt. She is holding a camera. The man, on the right, has a beard and is wearing a light-colored shirt and trousers. The backdrop features a sign that says 'SHOT' and a camera. The image is framed by a dark border.

leading Bombay supplier of professional photographic equipment, "and as a result the other brands are selling barely one-tenth the quantity which Hot Shot manages. But what is more important is that by their advertisements, which stressed the ease of photography, they are increasing public awareness of this medium and the total market for cameras."

To cash in on the software market which was a natural corollary to increased camera sales, Fazalbhoy also began importing Italian camera film which was relabelled with his "Piccolo" brand name and launched

Still Expensive: Although the camera market in the country is booming innovation and truly indigenous production are still lacking. Easy import of film has been a major factor in the boom, and this tap could easily be turned off. Also, the cameras launched in recent months are made entirely from imported components, argues Sompura and there are accusations that so-called manufacturers are importing unbranded cameras and iming them with their own brand names.

Camera prices in India remain high in comparison with large markets like the United States where similar 110 models are retailed by department store chains at less than half the Indian price. But the domestic market has nevertheless grown rapidly. Even more entrants were expected last fortnight to set up assembly plants and add to the proliferation of camera brands in the market. And with a market hungry to grab up these replacements for expensive smuggled models, there is every chance that the boom will last.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

When continued acceptance involves continuous raising of standards...

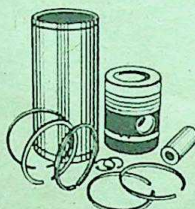
What is India Pistons doing about this change?

Leading automotive manufacturers, to whom India Pistons supplies a major share of its production, demand high standards of piston technology.

And this standard is not static, but keeps rising to be on par with international standards of product acceptability.

India Pistons is alive to the challenge and keeps high technology on par with the highly developed countries of the world.

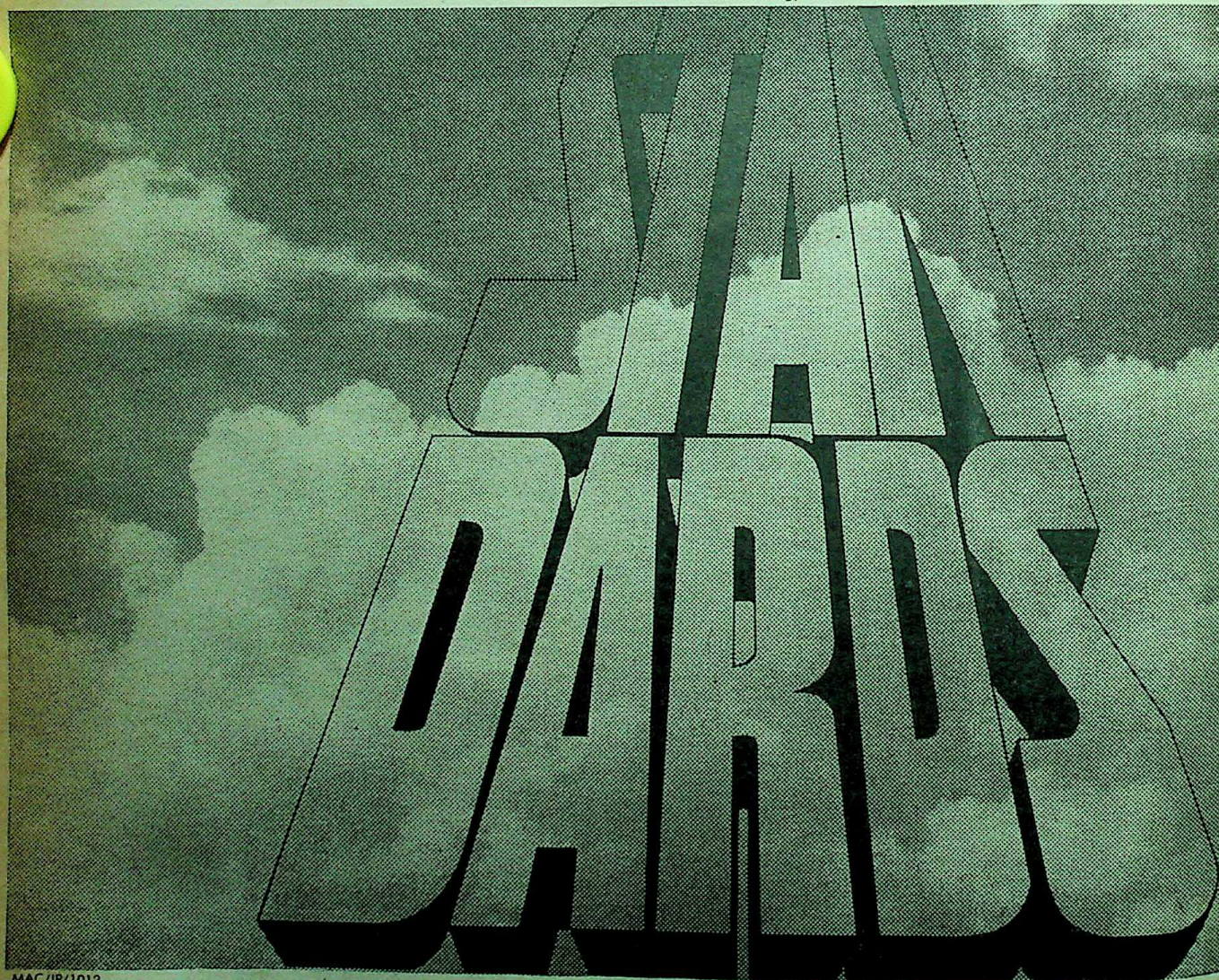
It's not surprising therefore that India Pistons enjoys wide acceptability with leading automotive manufacturers, the retail trade and also with the export market.



**India Pistons—
responding to the
changing environment**



INDIA PISTONS LIMITED, M



MAC/IP/1013

SIKKIM

Industrial Exodus

EIGHT months after Central excise laws were extended to Sikkim, the hollowness of the industrial boom in the state has been well and truly exposed. Not only has the mushroom growth of new units stopped, even the units already in existence have fled Gangtok, Simtang and Ngpo. Without tax advantages, Sikkim is hardly no industrial paradise.

Till last February, when the Excise and Its Tax Act became applicable to Sikkim, there had been a headlong rush into the state by numerous well-known companies—especially those operating in high-tax areas. More than eight factories in less than two years, and were saving Rs 2 crore tax a month on the production of 400 million cigs. Other units to spring up included a number of distilleries, and also a cosmetics unit. More units were on the cards, with the state Government having issued no fewer than 150 letters of intent and licences in industries as diverse as refrigerators and air-conditioners, vanaspati, aerated water, toothpaste, batteries, tyres and tubes, matches and fruit canning.

Backing Out: Suddenly, however, everything is in reverse gear. Seven of the eight cigarette factories have downed their shutters, and about the only units continue their operations are the state-owned Hindustan Machine Tools's watch unit and Hindustan's (India)'s cosmetics factory, apart from the liquor companies—which do not come under Central excise since liquor tax is a state subject.

Some 3,000 people have lost their jobs because of the industrial exodus, but Gangtok's influential politicians and bureaucrats have lost much more. These are the people who cornered the letters of intent and industrial licences and then set up joint ventures with the industrial majors—reaping enormous returns on usually negligible personal investments. The loss of this money has led to a chorus of protest at the introduction of excise duties in the state and has become a major political talking point. It has even become a bone of contention between Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari, and Governor Homi J.H. Taleyarkhan.

The cigarette companies in particular have been saving enormous amounts through tax breaks. Raja Swaminathan, marketing manager of National Tobacco, estimates that for every thousand sticks that the company manufactured in Sikkim, it saved Rs 35 in tax while incurring additional transport costs of only Rs 8: a saving of Rs 27. Given

the low margins that prevail in the industry, this was a windfall. Says Swaminathan: "For the seven months that we operated in Sikkim we made a handsome profit, and we were beginning to think that Sikkim was the answer to our financial problems."

The lone cigarette factory to stay on in Sikkim belongs to ITC, though a company spokesman in Calcutta dismissed it as "one which we are associated with". Pond's too has stayed on, because the company can feed its eastern market from the Sikkim factory. Said a company spokesman: "We needed a factory in eastern India to cater quickly to our big market in this region. And we chose Sikkim for the additional advantage of tax relief. Even after the relief has been withdrawn, we have decided to stay on because it is quicker and cheaper to supply the eastern markets from Sikkim rather than Madras."

Severe Criticism: Inevitably, the introduction of excise duties and the consequent industrial exodus have led to bitter criticism. Opposition politicians like N.B. Kathawada, leader of the Prajatantra Congress, have pointed to the loss of revenue to the state, while R.C. Poudyal, president of the Congress (Revolutionary), has criticised Bhandari for his collusion in the whole game. Bhandari has publicly sided with Taleyarkhan in defending the introduction of Central excise, but is believed to be privately encouraging the sniping at the governor on this issue. More than Bhandari, it is Taleyarkhan who has defended the Government's decision, arguing that the loss of employment means little since the people were only daily wagers, and that the state stands to gain much more by getting its share of Central excise collections.

The truth of the matter is that most of the units that sprang up in Sikkim had no reason to go there other than the tax benefits. Many of the cigarette factories merely packaged processed raw material that came in from elsewhere, and some of them used as little as 1 mw of electricity. The workers were daily-rated, paid no more than the local going rate. And local consumers did not get any benefit from tax-free production, in the form of lower product prices. But more than anything else, the tax haven had led to flourishing rackets in the hawking of licences grabbed by influential politicians. As state Congress(I) General Secretary C.D. Rai frankly admits: "Before the imposition of the duty, most people in my party were doing good business by selling licences."

Chief Minister Bhandari says: "Some factories might have closed down, but now

we will be getting around a crore of rupees as our share of the central divisible pool, which in the long run will be more beneficial to the people than daily-rated employment."

If the state Government is one with the Centre on the introduction of excise duties, there has been a bit of a flap over a subsequent measure: the extension of the Industries (Development & Regulations) Act to the state. This straightaway takes industrial licensing from the state's purview and makes it a Central subject. Bhandari protested arguing that his government had not been consulted but to no effect. Sikkim still enjoys a total exemption from income tax, but this is not a major attraction for companies.

To the ordinary Sikkimese, however, none of these questions matters very much. The industries that have fled the state used no local raw materials, sent their goods outside the state, and offered jobs that held out neither security nor attractive wages. The sudden exodus of industries means as little to him as their earlier mushroom growth.

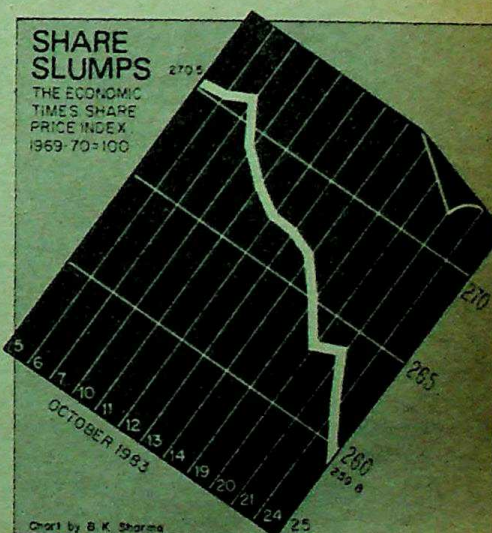
—SUMANTA SEN in Gangtok

THE MARKETS

Stock Reactions

IF THE economy is really looking up, as the Government says it is, the stock markets are not showing it. Out of 75-odd shares listed in INDIA TODAY, 50 are down and the general trend is anything but hopeful. The market doesn't seem to have anything to hold it up, though companies are not doing too badly. They might perk up after Diwali when the new year starts, but that too is doubtful.

The markets are apparently troubled by the uncertain political situation and the prospects of general elections which many think may be only a few months away. Uncertainty is always an upsetting factor.



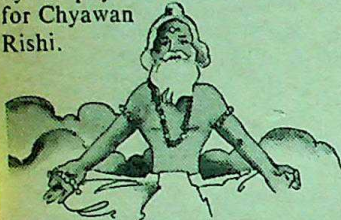
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shows you how a natural health tonic is so much better for your family.

Dabur Chyawanprash gives your family vitamins and minerals in their natural form, so they are easily absorbed by your body. And because it has no chemicals or artificial additives, it is free from side effects and is completely safe.

Chyawanprash—the 3000 year old health tonic

Chyawanprash, it is believed, was first made 3000 years ago, by the physicians of the Gods, for Chyawan Rishi.



Its powers were so amazing that the rishis began calling it 'the elixir of life'. They believed that it built up resistance to illness, kept body tissues young and the mind alert and active.

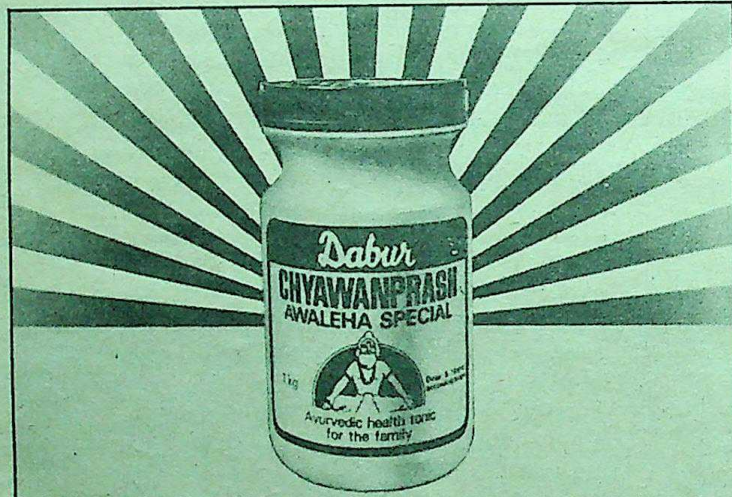
Dabur recreates the secret recipe of the rishis

Chyawanprash remained a secret of the rishis for centuries, till Dabur set up their first Ayurvedic plant decades ago.

Dabur Chyawanprash today is made in a highly automated plant, with more than 40 natural ingredients. The most important of these is fresh amla. It also contains dashmool and ashtwarg.

Amla juice has 20 times more vitamin C than orange juice

Amla, the main ingredient



of Dabur Chyawanprash, is the richest known source of vitamin C.



Dr. Linus Pauling, twice winner of the Nobel Prize, discovered that vitamin C does more than just prevent colds. It revitalizes body tissues and slows down the aging process. It also builds up your natural resistance

to coughs and other common ailments.

Dr. Pauling says, "Our bodies can fight disease effectively only when we have in our organs and body fluids enough vitamin C to enable our



natural protective mechanisms to operate effectively"

You need a natural tonic even if you're healthy

Far too many people believe that a health tonic is meant only for those who are sick.

That's not so. Ayurveda always believed that prevention is better than cure. So your family needs Dabur Chyawanprash—a natural health tonic which acts as a preventive, even if you're healthy.



Dabur Chyawanprash builds up your family's resistance to many diseases and helps to keep your whole family healthy.



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Your family's natural health tonic

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In its 100th year, Dabur has a fantastic offer for you, on selected Dabur products.

Whenever you buy one of these products, keep the cap in safe custody. You'll find a symbol and a slogan on the caps—"100 Years of Caring" (Indicated here). This symbol and slogan on the caps will be in three colours. The blue caps with black colour are worth 50 paise. The blue ones are worth one rupee and the red ones are worth two rupees. For Dabur Chyawanprash, the printed foil seal inside functions as the cap. Remember, the colour of the symbol will tell you the value. And of course, only caps/foil seals with the printing of the centenary symbol—"100 Years of Caring"—will be valid for this offer.

Once you've collected a sufficient number of caps/foil seals, you can go to any Dabur dealer and redeem them for any Dabur product of equivalent amount. Free. So start collecting the centenary caps. Now. For more details and terms of this unique offer, contact your nearest Dabur dealer.

Hurry! This offer is valid upto 31st December 1983 only.



BUSINESS

ACTIVE STOCKS

	High	Low	Close	Change on Fortnight
	1983	19.10.83		
Ambalal Sarabhai	17.75	12.25	12.25	(1.50)
Ashok Leyland	37.65	29.50	32.00	(0.75)
Asian Paints	42.50	29.00	42.50	2.50
Associated Cement	461.50	325.00	408.00	(14.00)
Atlas Copco	31.00	25.00	28.50	(0.50)
Bajaj Auto	1,800.00	990.00	1,530.00	(60.00)
Bharatpur	48.00	37.40	44.80	(1.00)
Baroda Rayon	312.00	210.00	233.00	(12.00)
Bata India	32.60	18.05	31.60	(0.90)
Birla Jute	57.40	46.10	55.10	(0.40)
Blow Plast	74.50	38.00	47.50	(0.50)
Bombay Dyeing	96.00	57.50	68.00	(2.00)
Britannia Industries	36.45	23.75	27.75	0.45
Brooke Bond	34.70	26.00	32.80	0.20
Calico Mills	247.00	135.00	135.00	(35.50)
Cent Tyres	285.00	195.00	235.00	(5.00)
Century Spinning	890.00	695.00	862.50	(17.50)
Chloride India	67.65	45.00	46.50	0.80
Colgate	99.00	84.00	92.00	2.00
Delhi Cloth Mills	105.50	32.31	91.62	1.62
Duncan Agro	207.00	135.00	207.00	3.00
Dunlop India	28.40	20.00	23.75	0.45
East India Hotels	29.00	20.00	26.25	(0.50)
Elecon Engineering	35.00	29.00	33.50	(0.50)
Escorts	82.87	39.75	62.25	(1.75)
Food Specialities	91.50	50.50	61.50	nil
Flaxo	31.50	20.00	22.35	0.35
Guest Keen Williams	23.00	18.00	20.20	0.50
Gwalior Rayon	52.00	44.00	48.50	(0.25)
Hindustan Aluminium	45.80	32.10	45.80	0.50
Hindustan Lever	71.50	51.75	69.00	(1.75)
Hindustan Motors	36.86	26.40	34.74	(0.42)
Indian Aluminium	24.80	16.25	24.80	0.40
Indian Explosives	27.40	22.00	26.50	0.50
Indian Organic	35.00	25.50	29.00	(1.50)
Indian Oxygen	36.00	30.40	36.00	0.27
Indian Rayon	86.00	76.50	62.50	(5.00)
Ingersoll-Rand	87.00	78.00	83.00	(3.00)
ITC	44.85	31.50	34.85	0.10
Jayshree Tea	37.50	20.35	33.75	(3.75)
J.K. Synthetics	57.50	32.00	43.50	0.40
Kelvinator	89.00	70.00	83.00	nil
Kesoram	68.10	55.80	57.60	(0.70)
Kinetic Engineering	163.00	68.00	117.00	(11.00)
Kothari (Madras)	25.25	18.00	23.00	(2.25)
Larsen & Toubro	73.00	52.00	70.50	(2.50)
Lipton	27.30	14.00	26.40	0.40
Lohia Machines	90.00	40.00	80.50	(9.50)
Madura Coats	23.25	15.30	23.00	(0.25)
Mahindra & Mahindra	66.00	42.00	60.00	1.00
Moti Rubber	35.37	22.69	25.75	0.25
Motor Industries	292.50	222.50	222.50	(8.75)
Nakand Iron	28.50	19.75	22.00	(2.50)
NRF	26.00	20.35	24.25	(0.50)
National Organic	207.50	156.25	156.25	(6.00)
Nrient Paper	51.00	40.20	46.80	(0.60)
Remier Auto	376.00	229.00	234.00	(42.00)
Ranbaxy	46.00	36.00	44.50	(0.50)
Raymond Woollen	65.00	36.50	61.00	(4.00)
Reliance	183.00	100.00	101.00	(2.50)
Remington Rand	33.00	19.00	33.00	0.85
Raw Wallace	44.00	22.20	43.60	0.05
Viram Fibres	41.50	27.75	31.00	(3.50)
PIC	28.25	15.25	25.00	(3.25)
Raw Products	48.00	38.30	45.00	(0.25)
Rata Chemicals	67.00	49.50	54.50	nil
Rata Steel	322.50	234.50	234.50	(34.50)
Reco	455.00	350.00	354.00	(31.00)
Refraco	59.00	38.00	54.00	(0.75)
Re Investments	19.05	16.00	19.05	0.05
Relion Carbide	25.75	21.50	23.25	(0.25)
Rha Martin Black	26.50	22.00	23.10	(0.15)
Ritas	365.00	262.00	352.00	(6.00)
Rachandnagar	21.50	15.00	21.00	nil
Rari Agro	34.60	22.40	34.60	0.90
Rat Trust	14.10	12.25	13.10	nil

more so if you do not know which way the cat will jump. There is also a tendency at the time of elections to go in for populist policies which almost without exception end up rubbing the private sector the wrong way. The nationalisation of 13 textile mills in Bombay, an obvious pre-election gimmick, is a case in point. A few more such gimmicks and the market might go into one of those long nose-dives from which it is generally impossible to recover unless it sheds a lot of weight.

The only silver lining, and this might ultimately make all the difference, is that companies are not doing too badly. Larsen & Toubro's new cement project is on stream and production has begun. Escorts expects to increase its turnover this year by a hefty 30 per cent, from Rs 223 crore to something like Rs 300 crore, and profits up by nearly the same margin. The turnover might go up to Rs 500 crore in 'the next few years'. Delhi Cloth Mills, another company caught in the non-resident squeeze, has not apparently done as well but has maintained the equity dividend at 15 per cent. DCM's sales have gone up from Rs 420 crore to Rs 460 crore but profits are down from Rs 15 crore to less than Rs 13 crore. Mahindra & Mahindra's new plant at Igatpur has started production and this seems to have put some life into its scrip which touched 60 last week. Asian Paints in Bombay and Ranbaxy in Delhi have also put up a good show.

The reduction in excise duties of certain products should eventually help quite a few scrips including Telco and Ashok Leyland in the truck sector, and Kelvinators and Philips in home appliances. It might also help pushing up demand for other industries, particularly aluminium which has surprisingly done pretty well in a falling market. In fact, if you look back a year, aluminium scrips have done better than nearly every other scrip, with the sole exception of tea plantations, which have totted up an increase of nearly 65 per cent over the year. Jute textiles and rubber have suffered badly, mainly on lack of demand, but tyre shares may look up following the cut in excise tariffs on tyres, though there are no signs of that yet.

It is rather a dull market which doesn't leave much scope for an investor, for all he can do is to lie low for a while until the clouds lift and the sun shines again. He can also switch his holdings about, taking them out of high-priced shares—and many are indeed high-priced—and putting them in scrips which don't seem to be attracting much attention. One such scrip is Automobile Corporation of Goa, a sleeper if ever there was one, but with interesting possibilities. It makes auto ancillaries and has a close tie-up with Telco. And anything that is good for Telco should be good for most of us.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates (Rs)	TT Buying Rates (Rs)
Australia	1 As \$	9.4763	9.3785
Austria	100 As Sch	56.7814	56.2197
Bahrain	1 Dinar	27.0425	26.8398
Bangladesh	100 Taka	41.5141	41.2031
Canada	1 Can \$	8.3962	8.3101
Denmark	1 D Kr	1.1027	1.0911
Egypt	1 Egg £	12.2335	12.1418
France	1 Fr Frc	1.3078	1.2946
Hong Kong	1 Hk \$	1.3354	1.3145
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0354	1.0277
Iran	100 Rial	11.9351	11.8457
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6479	0.6415
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.4492	4.4051
Kenya	1 K. Shilling	0.7603	0.7546
Kuwait	1 Dinar	35.2123	34.9485
Malaysia	1 Ml \$	4.4133	4.3670
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.8575	0.8511
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.7103	0.7050
Netherlands	1 D Glds	3.5555	3.5197
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.7746	0.7688
Singapore	1 Sing \$	4.8517	4.8000
Spain	100 Sp Pt	6.7630	6.6988
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4194	0.4163
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.3324	1.3181
Switzerland	1 Sw Frc	4.9148	4.8646
Tanzania	1 T Sch	0.8412	0.8349
Thailand	100 Baht	44.6833	44.2790
UK	1 Pound	15.4843	15.3480
USA	1 US \$	10.3075	10.1700
UAE	1 Dirham	2.7748	2.7540
USSR	1 Rouble	13.7088	13.6061
W. Germany	1 DM	3.9959	3.9556

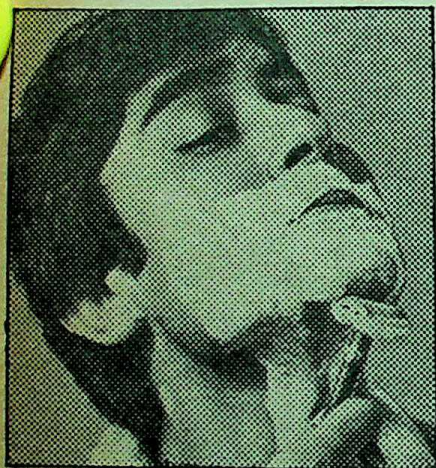
These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd. New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 21.10.83.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest
ET Commodity Price Index*	
October 18, 1983	272.2 (6.3)
Cereals	246.2 (14.6)
Chemicals	342.7 5.7
Industrial Fibres	184.0 (5.8)
Metals	372.4 (1.3)
Sugar	198.7 (5.2)
Textile Yarn	220.4 (0.1)
Vegetable Oils	334.8 (16.8)
Gold, standard,	
October 18, 1983	1,860.00 30.00
(Rs per 10 gm)	
Silver, .999,	
October 18, 1983	3,660.00 (15.00)
(Rs per kg)	
SHARES	
ET Share Price Index*	
October 19, 1983	265.3 0.3
Cement	252.9 (2.7)
Chemicals	201.4 (10.0)
Engineering	462.8 4.8
Fertilisers	220.5 (3.9)
Man-made Fibres	411.7 19.8
Paper	510.5 (2.2)
Rubber Goods	173.1 1.5
MONEY (per cent)	
Money Supply, September 26, 1983	0.2
Bank Deposits	0.5
Foreign Exchange Assets	(6.1)
* 1969-70 = 100	

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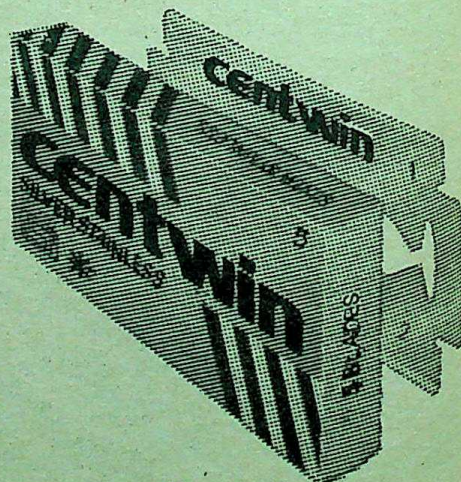
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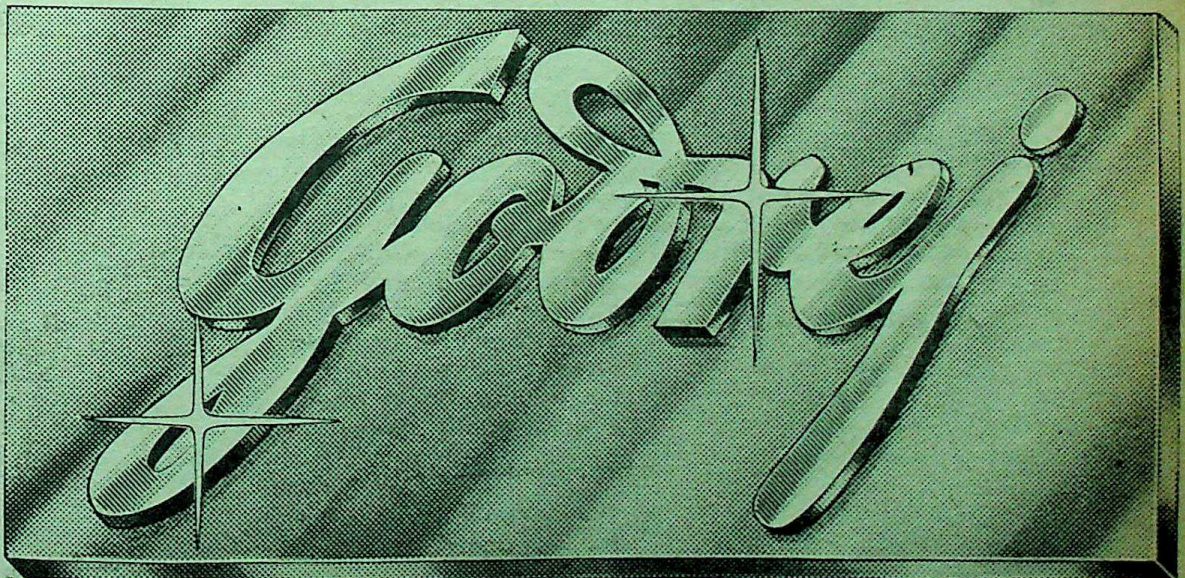
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MRINAL SEN

The Maverick Master

UNTIL somebody else comes along to change it," prophesied film historian Penelope Houston 20 years ago. "Satyajit Ray's Bengal will remain cinema's India." For Ray, the prediction was deservedly complimentary; for the 750 films a year Indian film industry—the world's largest—it wasn't. Specially so because there was no dearth of Indian efforts to win the West. The 'curry western' certainly reached as far as the Gulf market, but was baulked at the doorway of Europe. Raj Kapoor of course continued to be rupee-traded to the Soviet Union, with Darjeeling tea and Assam jute. And as Shyam Benegal's perceptive cinema briefly flickered in the western sky only to abruptly fall away, Houston's prophecy seemed to sit there like a curse.

No longer. At 61, and turning a new chapter in 1979, 18 films after his non-descript debut with *Rat Bhore* (The night's end) in 1979, Mrinal Sen today has edged past nearly all Indian film makers recognised abroad and respected at home. He is slowly inching forward to close the gap between him and the undisputed front-runner—Ray.

After a recent round of festival conquests in Europe—at Cannes and Berlin—Sen is clearly the second international film celebrity to emerge out of India's vast and generally faceless film industry, after Ray blitzed his way through world cinema with *Pather Panchali*, made in 1955. This year, *Kharij* (The case is dismissed), his 1982 film, got the special jury award at Cannes, 27 years after *Pather Panchali*, the only other Indian film, got an equivalent award in the world's most prestigious film festival. In 1980, the Berlin Silver Bear was awarded to him for *Akaler Sandhaney* (In search of famine): again a feat that only Ray had equalled, way back in the '60s.

Commanding Respect: Back home, no one other than Sen has bagged the Golden Lotus, the top Indian honour, with more regularity—four times against Ray's tally of five. Since 1965, not a year has passed with Sen's entry receiving no award at the national film festival. With the rider "other than Ray" added, no Indian film maker commands so much of respect among backers, critics, actors and actresses as Sen today does. Actress Shabana Azmi threw her dates, fixed months in advance, to four winds to work for his latest film, *Khandhar*. Movie Mogul G.P. Sippy coaxes him to make a film under his banner, with no strings attached.

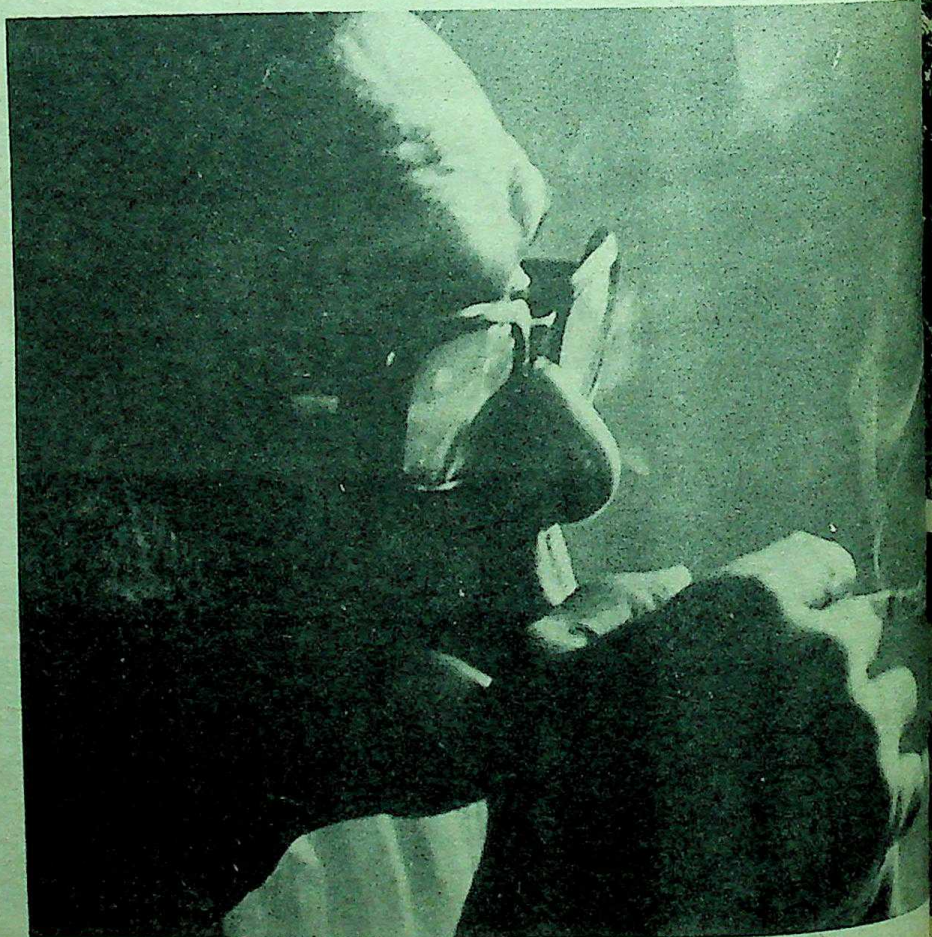
Sen's recent films have been shown in

prime time slots in West Germany, France, Switzerland and Scandinavia. Retrospectives of his films have drawn record audiences at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. In London, his *Ek Din Pratidin* (And quiet rolls the day), the 1979 masterpiece, ran in Gate Theatre for over three months. Cactus Films, the dynamic Zurich-based distributing firm, could cut a high profile in Europe's highly competitive foreign film market purely on the strength of Sen's repertoire. Writing in *Sight and Sound*, cine-buffs' Bible the world over, observed Derek Malcolm, the London *Guardian's* film critic: "He (Sen) is now regarded as one of the Third World's most experienced radical film makers."

Sen, in his own words, is "uncertain, erratic, desperate". His 23 films are as spiky and uneven as the cardiac graph of a heart patient. He has switched techniques dramatically all along, mixing freewheeling *cinema verite* style with strong narrative forms, punctuating story-telling with newsreel footage, interspersing pathos with comedy and generally making fun of everything

including himself. Successes, naturally, alternated with failure and his maverick tendencies tended to overshadow his identity as master of the cinema.

However, with *Ek Din Pratidin*, the cinema acquired an altogether new dimension of style. With no adornments, no external trappings, and a script as taut as a watch-spring, the film puts under microscope the reaction of a middle class family whose bread-eater, an unmarried daughter spent a night away without informing home. The film is a *tour de force* in capturing the nuances of middle class self-esteem, turning from a source of embarrassment and finally to a source of lessness. Though the film bombed at the office in Calcutta, Cactus sold it to too many every TV and parallel cinema network in Western Europe, besides arranging its commercial release in London. From a relative obscurity of the Bengali cinema, women acting in *Ek Din Pratidin* leaped to prominence: Gita Sen, the director's 51-year-old actress wife who played the dhanised mother; and Sreela Mazumdar, a



Sen: gaining respect at home and abroad

rather gawky beginner who gave an outstanding performance as the absentee's younger sister.

Triumphs: Disbelievers still took Sen for a trick pony, such being his reputation for unpredictability. But they rubbed their eyes in amazement as a torrent of successive triumphs unreeled from Sen's repertoire. Her *Sandhaney* was about a film unit's effort to reconstruct a 40-year-old film honestly. In this unique film on the life of a film actress, acted superbly by both Gita and Smita, the lead role was played by Smita Patil who hopped between film and life, illusion and reality, with incredible dexterity. At the film's end, Sen distilled out the essence: famines are not mere benchmarks in history but a continuous reality. The film is a people are afraid to admit it. Sen's prodigiously fecund post-1979 work was marked by *Chalchitra*, the sad and angry story of an aspiring journalist getting too deeply involved in a news feature on a cinema network around him; and *Kharij*, the nervy, arranging the story of a young couple trying to cover a carbon monoxide poisoning while sleeping in the same room one winter night. These films formed the dirgeous overture to his crowning work, *Khandhar* (The ruin), made in Hindi was completed this year with Naseeruddin Shah.

Shabana Azmi, Pankaj Kapoor, Gita and Sreela in the cast. Probably India's official entry in the Berlin festival this year, *Khandhar*, according to many of those who attended its exclusive screenings in Calcutta, is destined to be the most talked-about film in recent times, apart from being a "sure award-grabber".

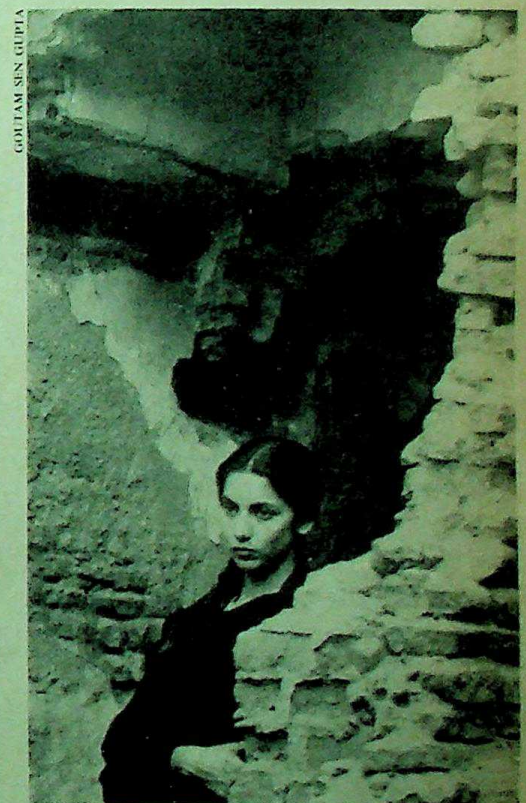
Khandhar is set in a Chekhovian world of dark, cold nights, crumbling buildings, cobwebs of fantasy and hard, stony silence. Shah plays an agency photographer who, accompanied by two of his friends, arrive for a week-end in a remote Bihar village whose buildings indicate past affluence but are now battered and look bombed out. However, their week-end is threatened by a little and sordid drama involving a mother-and-daughter duo in which they accidentally get mixed up. The photographer is curious about the daughter, played by Shabana Azmi, just as he is curious about the Gothic arches twisted out of shape by time, the peeling frescoes and the crumble of jagged stucco. He tries to capture it through his lens before the troublesome week-end comes to its close. Back in his city office, with the pictures printed and laid out, the memory of the ruins blends with the noise of the traffic outside.

Azmi who in this film turns in one of

the most memorable performances in her career as the daughter, summed up the film when she said that in *Khandhar* Sen was "capturing moments of relationship" — between the mother (played by Gita Sen) and the daughter, between the two and the photographer, and between everyone and the ruins. In etching the relations, Sen used images, sound and rhythm as delicately as a poet would use his metrical surprises, an odd turn of a phrase or a half-line. There are patches of total silence in the film, interrupted by a short grunt or a crackling of dry leaves; yet the film never seems to lack pace. The camera of K.K. Mahajan, who worked with Sen since 1967, relentlessly explores the space between characters, the longings, the half-gestures and the muted expressions of despair.

Khandhar is a film of atmosphere and is a surprising departure for Sen whose familiar milieu is the Calcutta middle class. It is the class he knows best, and of which he is a member himself, wearing its trade mark uniform, a drab white kurta-pyjama; sharing all its intellectual concerns; and even looking like its prototype with his thick glasses, his mop of unkempt hair, and the touch of snow at the temples.

Like a bumbling Bengali babu (and unlike Ray, who is sahib every inch) Sen has



(Clockwise from left) Vasudeva Rao in *Oka Oorie Katha* (1977), Gita Sen in *Ek Din Pratidin* (1979), Smita Patil in *Akaler Sandhaney* (1980) and Shabana Azmi in *Khandhar*: an ever growing list of successes

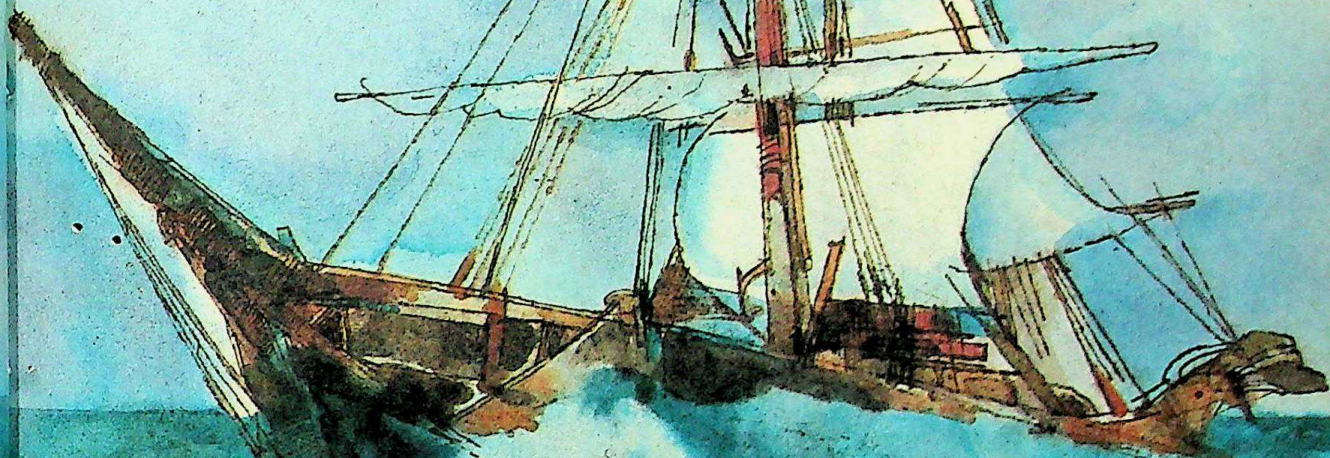
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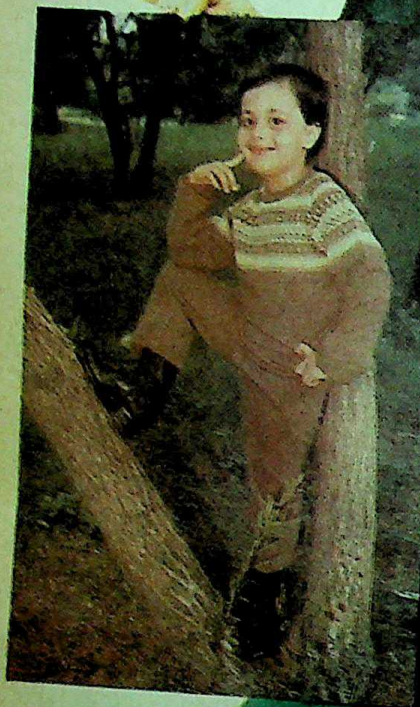
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Contract For Misery

WHEN a division bench of the Gujarat High Court responded to a letter from labour leaders at the Karmachari Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd (KFFC), last month, no one expected that the routine steps it took would lead to startling disclosures. In the letter, Rohit Vasavada and A.J. Das, leaders of the Karmachari Sangh had alleged that contract labourers at the Kalol plant were being forced to work in inhuman conditions. Chief Justice Poti and Justice S.B. Majumdar who comprised the bench, treated the letter as a writ petition and appointed an advocate, Ramesh Bhatt, as court commissioner to investigate the charges. Within hours of the court's directive, on October 10, Bhatt was at the plant of the KFFC, a giant cooperative. He found shocking evidence that belied the reputation of the KFFC as a model of labour conditions in the state which are believed to be the best in the country.

Bhatt discovered that 300 contract labourers who had been recruited in penurious conditions from their villages in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh were being grossly exploited by the contractor who had employed them to work in the plant:

Labourers were being made to work longer than the stipulated working hours. On a subsequent visit on October 6, Bhatt saw supervisors beating up Babulal Chamar and Babu Chagan Chamar because they refused to work for a further shift after completing their eight-hours of work; workers were not being paid the salary which had been promised. The advocate found that the maximum the labourers had got was Rs 1.50 a day, although at the time of recruitment they had been promised Rs 25 per

Workers were being confined within the plant, with security men making sure that they did not leave the site; No records had been kept of the workers, they had been given neither gate passes nor identity cards. Their addresses had not been taken down, so that in the event of an emergency, there would be no way to reach their families. Worse, since only 26 of them were registered—of whom only 10 had been working in the plant existed, the rest would not be able to claim compensa-

tion in the event an accident took place;

► Although their job involved the handling of large quantities of urea, no protective gloves or boots had been provided, with the result that many of the workers suffered burns and blisters on their hands and feet;

► Despite being promised good working conditions, the workers had to endure bad food, sleeping under a cloth pandal with a gunny sack for a bedsheet if they were lucky, and the open sky for a roof if they were not. No health services had been provided.



Workers loading urea at the IFFCO plant: shocking facts

Unhappy Lot: The distraught workers, 110 of whom Bhatt personally interviewed, expressed their unhappiness and helplessness in the plant. At least 80 were bitter enough to want to leave right away. Said Shakir Ahmed of Uttar Pradesh: "We were promised daily wages. I have been here for 25 days, but haven't been paid a paisa. The urea has burnt my feet and hands. We will all leave as soon as we are paid." There were stray cases of some being paid paltry sums ranging from Rs 2 to Rs 10, just once or twice a month. They had been hired temporarily to counter a go-slow strike by the regular workers of IFFCO, which had led to a piling up of urea stocks in the plants silos, making it inconvenient to store subsequent stocks, and hampering production. It was therefore ironic that the Karmachari Sangh, which stood to lose by the presence of these other workers, should actually have made efforts to better their lot. Explained Vasavada: "The contract labourers were brought in to break the strike, but we decided to fight for them, as it involved human rights and dignity."

Bhatt's report to the court had the desired effect: the workers now get their salaries regularly and working conditions have improved vastly. Further, 200 of the nearly 300 workers have been allowed to go home. However, the management of IFFCO counters both Bhatt's findings and the charge put on record by Vasavada and Das. Reacting to the allegation of exploitation, C.P. Mathur, general manager of IFFCO said: "The workers were being paid Rs 25 a day. This can never be labelled exploitation." As to the charge that workers were not being allowed out of the site premises, Mathur said this was to ensure that they were not beaten up by the striking unionists. The management also justified not keeping records of the contract

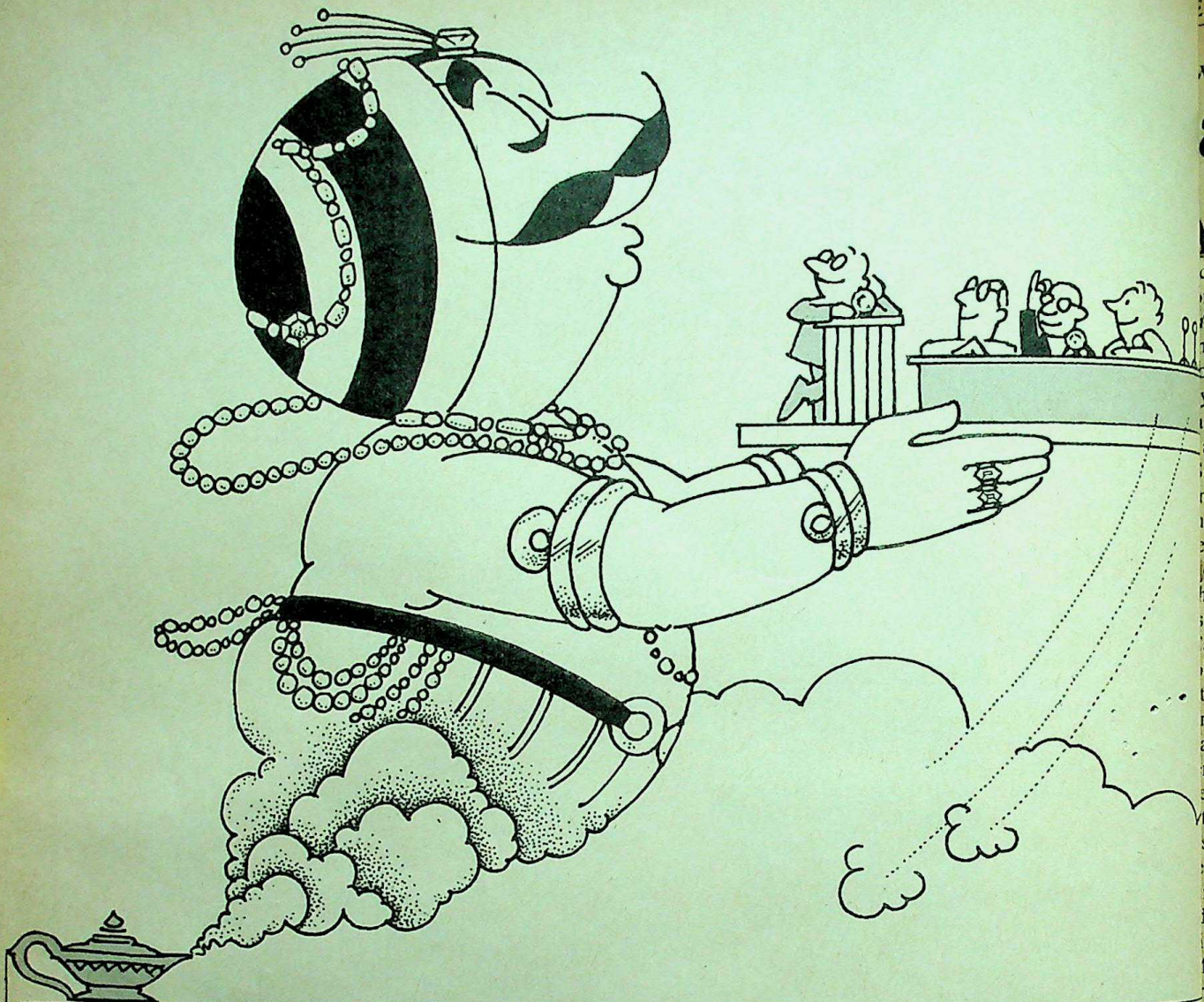
workers on the ground that it was an "emergency" situation.

Indifferent Attitude: The contractor, Dhanesh Shah, who had recruited the labour was even more laconic in his reply to the allegations. He said in an affidavit to the court that the workers who handled the urea did get their hands burnt, but these were not as bad as the burns caused by fire. However, he added, the burning sensation would not last very long, as the worker would soon get used to it. Therefore the workmen did not need to be provided with "sophisticated" equipment like gloves, he concluded. Reading out the affidavit, Chief Justice Poti said he was shocked by the insensitivity of the contractor.

In a significant judgement, the bench directed the state labour commissioner to identify firms and contractors employing contract labourers and see that all laws were being followed to ensure the well-being of the labourer. The labour commissioner was asked to make a list of unlicensed contractors and periodically present it to the court along with observations on the conditions of work. More importantly, the bench in a dramatic departure from its traditional role of confining itself to settling inter-party disputes, called upon courts to take direct initiative to ensure that liberties and rights were not denied to those who might have been unable to approach the court due to poverty, ignorance or some social disability.

In a situation where despite the plethora of labour laws meant to protect the interests of the workers, enforcement agencies seem to take their duties with a sense of unconcern, it is significant that the Gujarat High Court has seen fit to recall the responsibility of the courts as "true sentinels of freedom".

—RAMESH MENON



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Age Of The Stage

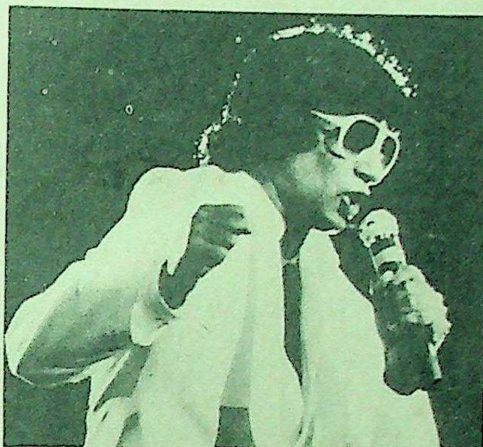
ROUTINE sequence in virtually every Hindi formula film has the male lead on stage surrounded by a chorus-line of curvaceous females belting out romances to the appreciative roars of an audience which includes a wildly clapping one. Surprisingly for an industry which missed a trick in its quest for the big age-old formula was never tried till life audiences: till Amitabh Bachchan along that is.

Since 1981, when he first hit the trail on "concert tour" of the West Indies and five American cities, the lanky superstar defined his stage extravaganzas to the joy of an alternate art form, and last year, when he returned to Bombay after an extensive tour of Trinidad, the United States and Canada, he left in every city the largest following of expatriate Indians ever to gather together for an Indian star. In less than months the travel-weary film star had and played up to the frenzied applause of 1.5 lakh fans in 16 stage shows spanning even countries in three continents. Said Amitabh Bachchan: "It's been a real thrill so close to my fans, to be able to meet them and talk to them and rap with them in a manner so personal and intimate that it can never be the same in films."

Mid-July found Bachchan in London where he filled the 11,000 capacity Wembley Arena in London on his first tour, running before moving on to a strong audience in Birmingham. A day later he had filled London's Wembley Stadium with 90,000 third-generation Indian fans resettled in Holland from India. And last month his tour leaping to the tune of songs like "Dil Se Dil, Silsila, Khuddaar" and "Dil Se Dil" was enthralling audiences coast to coast in North America.

Performance: Bachchan's stage shows have fallen into a well-worn pattern of three years of near-repetition, and the star, with his wife, has become standard as a sequence for the nearly four-hour show of song, dance, jokes and gimmickry. Known formally as a "Kalyanji Anandji Night"—since the music director Kalyanji Anandji is complete with orchestra and singing stars to fill in each time the sun sets off the stage—the shows are a mixture of playback singers like Manharana, Yagnik, comedian and filmstar Johnny Lever, singing stars Nazia and

Zoheb Hasan, supporting star Reena Roy, Parveen Babi, Zeenat Aman or Rati Agnihotri. But, however, from the outset at every show it is never unclear just who the star of the evening is. "Ever since the first time he sang a song at a Lata Mangeshkar night in 1980 the people have just adored him," said Bachchan's Los Angeles-based "world-wide representative" and show organiser Kirit Trivedi, a diminutive Indian-born Ugandan,



Bachchan (top) and his ecstatic fans in Madison Square Garden: new avenues

"each time they go berserk, shriek and shout themselves hoarse it's amazing the way he can control his audience."

Each time he reappeared on stage after a break for one of the Kalyanji Anandji troupe, Bachchan was dressed in a striking new costume: the glittering purple gave way to a stark white suit, the kurta and shawl worn to replace father Harivanshrai's quartets to a dazzling black suit lined with 25-watt electric bulbs which provided the only light on a stage encircled by a scantily-clad chorus-line of leg-kicking beauties borrowed from nearby Broadway. And half-way through the evening he reappeared accompanied by Zeenat Aman, this time to thrill his audience

with a provocative multi-lingual love duet from *Khuddaar*.

Phenomenal Idea: The Bachchan stage shows began more as a result of chance and circumstance than actual planning. Invited three years ago to appear as chief guest at a New York concert by Lata Mangeshkar—his Los Angeles Hindi cinema hall "Four Star" having closed down due to video competition, Trivedi had switched to organising shows for expatriate Indians—Bachchan made a last-minute decision to give the audience their money's worth and sang the soon-to-be-released song *Jiskee hibi moti*. "When I saw the delirious reaction of the audience I knew that we had hit on a phenomenon," said Trivedi "I realised instantly that Amitabhji was really a hot-selling product, that if we could convince him to sing in a full-scale stage show he would gross what nobody can even dream of."

Trivedi and his partner Naresh Patel got to work and a few months later in 1981, the first tour with four shows in the West Indies, four in America and one in Canada was organised. The tour was a roaring success and a double album with a compilation of its song and dialogue routines released by Music India sold over 5 lakh units. A second major tour of Britain and America planned last year had to be scuttled after Rs 22 lakh worth of tickets had been sold by British impresario Barry Marshall because Bachchan suffered an accident during shooting which put him in hospital for over two months.

Trivedi is reluctant to disclose just how much money is made on the tours, and insists that costs are so high that the advantage is more in publicity value and contact with fans. But the shows are clearly money-spinners too. With tickets priced on an ascending scale from the equivalent of Rs 70 to Rs 1,000 at New York's Madison Square Garden, gross takings for the single show amounted to a staggering Rs 40 lakh; although rental for the auditorium cost almost Rs 17 lakh and the expenses were probably considerable, net profits generated could be no mean amount. At Wembley Arena, likewise, tickets yielded Rs 20 lakh.

In Bombay last fortnight to finalise arrangements for a Hollywood film he plans to produce with Bachchan in the lead, Trivedi disclosed plans for 1984 tours to Fiji and Far East, East Africa and Nigeria and finally the Middle East. Closer home, a major show is planned around the New Year at Bombay's Wankhede Cricket Stadium, the proceeds to be donated to a medical research trust founded by Bachchan after he recovered from his brush with death.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

14th



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KAPALEESWARAR TEMPLE

Tradition Of Tolerance

FOR ONE day in the year, the arch-conservative environs of Brahmin-dominated Mylapore in Madras plays host to a singular phenomenon. The majestic Kapaleeswarar temple, sacred to worshippers of Lord Shiva becomes, on the 10th day of the Islamic month of Moharrum, the site of a remarkable and heart-warming display of tolerance and brotherhood. Scores of Muslims converge upon the banks of the temple's tank to offer prayers, following a 200-year-old tradition.

This strange and happy sight occurred once again last fortnight by the temple built where, according to legend, Goddess Parvati in the guise of a peacock, danced in courtship of Lord Shiva. Mylapore, of which the temple forms the heart, means "where the peacock danced". Muslims from various parts of the city carrying *panjas*—representing the family of the Prophet—for immersion in the tank, gather there in the morning.



Muslims carrying the *panja* to the temple

This year, however, due to the unprecedented drought in Tamil Nadu, there is no water in the tank. This does not deter the devout—they simply bring water with them, sit on the steps of the tank and pray. As the evening advances, their prayers coincide with

the ringing of bells in the temple, and claim the unity of the human race. Many are moved by the serenity and devotion there—even the people of other religions. Says an exhausted but living among Muslims these last 30 years, the family prayers at Moharrum somehow made an impression on me. I, too, started praying. For the past 10 years, I have been bringing *panja* to Mylapore. And I believe in God and God manifests himself in so many ways."

Religious Harmony: In a touching ceremony that blends both religions, Dharmarajan's wife performs the *panja*, and later the couple smear camphor on their foreheads. A young man, watching, says: "This is a beautiful madness."

There is no written record of this unique practice of Muslims praying at a Hindu temple came about. The temple was built in the early 17th century, but its history does not speak of the huge gathering. According to N. S. K. Ramani, a noted authority on South Indian archaeology, the temple tank was built in the 18th century, during the reign of

CALCUTTA

Festival Frolics

TO THE chagrin of purists, the most important of Bengali festivals—the Durga puja—has become an occasion only for fun and frolic. The four day puja, now a community affair, is no longer purely one for prayer and worship but a display of pomp and cheap grandeur. As Jiten Pal, one of the many artists who has traditionally been building images in the dingy north Calcutta locality of Kumartuli, so aptly said: "These days we do things mechanically as we know that to both the organisers of *barwari* (community) pujas and people in general, what matters more is the pandal decoration not the Goddess."

All the fun and fanfare accompanying the puja has undeniably taken over as the main attraction of this festival. The puja at Mohammad Ali Park, one of the biggest in the city, resembled a palace; the pandal was a huge wooden structure decorated with coloured cloth with murals on the outside, while a huge chandelier glitte-

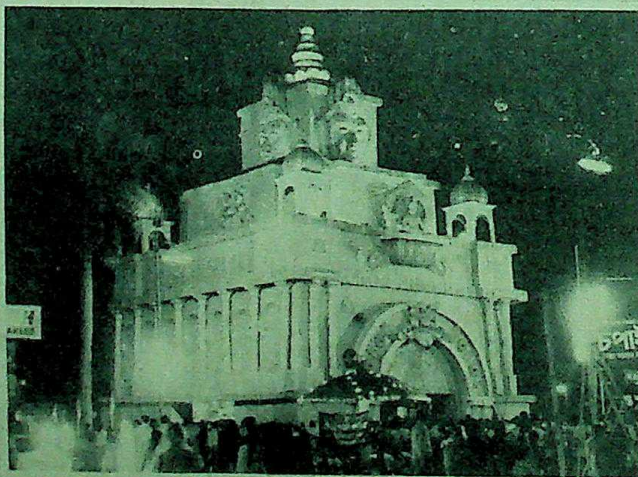
red inside to create an atmosphere recalling the *jalsaghars* (party rooms) of zamindars than a place of worship.

Amazing Expenditure: "Our budget this year was around Rs 1.20 lakh of which we spent Rs 60,000 on the pandal and Rs 20,000 on the image," said one of the organisers. Explaining the expense, they said: "This is an age of competition and we must ensure that our puja stands apart from the rest which means that there must be greater emphasis on external decoration for that is what attracts the crowd." And, judging from the huge

gatherings on all four days, they had indeed been successful.

At the Santosh Mitra Square, one of the bigger centres of community Durga puja, the image had been modelled after the wall carvings of an early sixth century Durga temple in a Bijapur village built by Prithvi Ballav Jaisingha. Yet, such concern for the look of the image did not attract the organisers from the main thing, that the pandal is the thing, for while Rs 6,500 was spent on the image, the two-storeyed pandal accounted for Rs 18,000. South Calcutta's Samaj Sangha claimed its puja was the cheapest, budgeted the lowest in the city with only Rs 10,000 on the pandal, which was exactly double the amount spent on the Goddess and her entourage. In the past, the suit of novel backgrounds for the puja, it was not uncommon to see a traditionally modelled Durga staring wide-eyed at the electric decoration of cricketers in action—an attempt to link the festival in time with the World Cup victory.

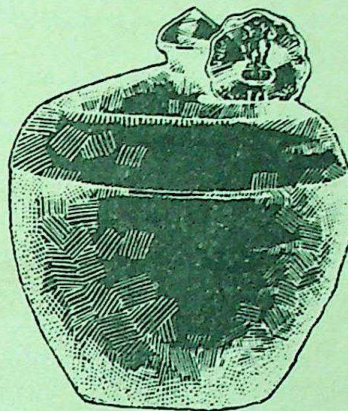
Reaction: Writing in the *Statesman*, Paritosh Sen said: "The *para* (locality) boys and mastans who have taken over the leadership of these



The pandal at Mohammad Ali Park

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temple, as Ali, nawab of the Carnatic. But who human race it is not known. Explains Ramaswamy: by the sense people say that this land on which the e—even the stands was gifted by the nawab, who convinced D that the tank be allowed to be used by living amonms during Moharrum. Another story rs, the fas he Hindus were so pleased with the to- somehow m religious views of the Muslim ruler , started f they allowed use of the tank".

Islamic scholar Ahmed Ali Parpia is specific. He says that the land was manifested by the nawab, along with another plot d in central Madras on which the adripet temple stands. Says Parpia: nawab is said to have told the Mus- nobody should interfere with this land to the temple. If anyone does interfere, on you, the sin would be that of mur- says: "Thus 10 Brahmins".

Although the origins of the practice are led in mystery, the sight of Muslims shouldered with orthodox Shaivites is a sight to behold, particularly in the communal tension and mutual suspi- century, elsewhere. For at least one day every men, women and children of both reli- stand together, pray and prove that Indian hising different deeds does not have to tank was disharmony and rancour.

—K.N. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

days, they had a chance to be aware of the cul- values that nurtured preceding Square, oc tions—thanks to World War II, munity D an-made famine of 1942-43, the modelled lunal riots of 1946 and finally the ly sixth cen on of the country." A clay modeller village bu martuli wailed: "Imagine our fee- Yet, such when young organisers of pujas age did no to us with instructions that the the main thes must have a touch of Hema g, for while on her face or Kartika must have the images ms in keeping with the present ounted for tion." The community puja has 's Samaj rated to the garish and absurd; d its puja uently, the Calcutta intelligentsia west in the anda Bazar Patrika survey, do 000 on the h to be associated with the celebra- exactly do almost all were leaving the city for nt on the G pastures during the puja. ourage. In the pace of merrymaking seems to ackgrounds ackened this year. The festivity not uncom ed more subdued with micropho- onally mod ing Hindi film songs from pandal wide-eyed as in evidence than before. Trade- on of crick and street performers complained attempt to lo ed earnings than last year. As the me with In gressed into its third and fourth ory. ere was a noticeable decline in the Writing in s thronging theatres and cultural tosh Sen ances which formerly were ality) boys full to capacity. Durga puja in ave taken it, it sadly appears, is no longer of these P used to be.

—SUMANTA SEN

Rediscovering Legends

PURI PAINTINGS

The Chitrakara And His Work

by J.P. DAS

Arnold-Heinemann

Price: Rs 250; Pages: 200



JAGANNATH, the beady-eyed god of the famous Puri temple must be the most oddly fashioned of all our gods iconographically speaking. He has round eyes with retinas stranded in the centre; a red, banana-shaped smile; a yellow rim around his black face; a conical crown; a cylindrical body covered with garlands and two stumpy arms that emerge from beneath the neck. The other two of the triad seem equally naive and awkward. It would be hard to imagine that such primitive imagery could surround itself with such elaborate rituals and, even more so, occupy a coterie of *chitrakaras* or artists whose brushes have continued to paint this triad since the 12th century.

J.P. Das, who belongs to Orissa, delved into his past (common with Jagannath's) to unearth a thesis of material on the painter community and their work. For a start, Das tells of the legend how Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra were carved by Vishvakarma but could not be completed. The legend links directly to tribal worship also explaining "the tribal look of the images, which had nothing in common with other Hindu images made according to iconographic canons".

Comprehensive Study: Das's research is thorough as thorough can be. An erudite Bhabha Fellow, he has conducted impressive studies to compile and update available information. In a very systematic and often schoolbookish manner—perhaps necessary for an art with which we are totally unfamiliar—the author begins with the larger world of the painter, then narrows in on the *chitrakara* caste and its connection with the Jagannath temple. The study is comprehensive. It seems that wherever the word *chitrakara* appears in the context of Orissa, Das has managed to detect it and fit it to the context of his research.

While this becomes a valuable document for the future, parts of it look and read like a census report or the revenue records. Fortunately, this 'thesis factor' dilutes with the chapters and those who will be able to

wade through its obsessively academic beginning will be rewarded with interesting insights and anecdotes. It appears that a lot of the original research has been oral because the exponents of the tradition live on. They have narrated what their memory can recall and what books before J.P. Das's had often considered too mundane to record.

Raghujapur village is the best known for *pata* paintings. Here, "every *chitrakara* family has at least one member engaged in painting. In many families all the members are engaged in painting, the womenfolk and children assisting the grown-ups". It is interesting to note that *chitrakaras* guilty of polygamy are "punished with a heavy cash fine. Hypergamous marriage, that is mar-

riage above one's caste is accepted, the prior permission of the Caste but hypogamy, that is marriage to a lower caste is not accepted at all." A *chitrakara* once ostracised for painting the lower caste. Another was "excommunicated" when he lifted a stone slab, the of which was held by an untouchable.

Substitute Icons: Perhaps prestigious seva or service of a *chitrakara* the painting of substitute icons at a temple when the wood is discoloured after their ritual bath away for 14 days. The substitute painted on cloth. "Before work painting," writes Das, "he (the painter) to take a bath and wear a fresh dhoti. No women should be present the painting is in progress and sex is bidden.... Yet the deities are not the missing images but different



A *chitrakar* at work; a series on noses (right) and (above left) Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra in a *pata* painting; elaborate rituals



nath as Narayana, Balabhadra as Seshadeva and Subhadra as Sushila. For different festivals the paintings have different fees. Comparing the famous Ratha Yatra of Puri, the spectacular ceremony of the temple, it becomes apparent. In 1955 the painting cost Rs 3.87 and daily wages of Rs 3.50. This figure had risen to Rs 3.50 in 1955.

In a fascinating case history of the *chitrakara* we learn that the present-day *chitrakara* owes its status to an American called Halina Zealey whose husband was stationed in Orissa. She was a member of a private voluntary organisation of the Quakers called the American Service Committee. Her association with the *chitrakaras* made the impossible. She brought

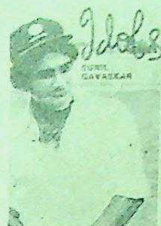
Master Stroke

IDOLS

by SUNIL GAVASKAR

Rupa & Co

Price: Rs 20; Pages: 293



SUNIL Gavaskar's greatest forte has been his exquisite timing; an attribute that has not just been confined to the cricket field alone. The release of his second book, *Idols*, is—and the pun is unavoi-

able—a masterly stroke. Despite having somewhat lost his gluttonous appetite for runs, Gavaskar is currently poised threateningly on the brink of his 29th Test century to equal the legendary Sir Donald Bradman's world record. Consequently, he is back basking in the limelight and he could not have timed the release of his second book any better than one of his cover-drives.

Few people have any doubt that the current series against the West Indies, which gives him as opening bat, possibly 12 innings, will see him reach that magic figure. That accomplishment will be enough to elevate him once again to centre-stage and no doubt boost the sales of his new book considerably. Like his cricket, Gavaskar's writing style seems to have mellowed. His first book the autobiographical *Sunny Days*, had a little more force and spirit, written as it was when "Sunny" had just set the cricketing world on fire. *Idols*, as the name suggests, is based on cricketers he has admired and the book is basically his personal assessment of them. Each chapter is dedicated to one idol and the list of players Gavaskar discusses is impressive enough. Derek Underwood, Geoff Boycott, Alan Knott, Ian Botham and John Snow of England, Denis Lillee, Geoff Thomson, Greg and Ian Chapell and Rodney Marsh of Australia, Glen Turner and Richard Hadlee of New Zealand, the Pakistanis, Zaheer Abbas, Javed Miandad, Asif Iqbal and Imran Khan and West Indians, Gary Sobers, Rohan Kanhai, Andy Roberts and Clive Lloyd.

Surprise Inclusion: Among his own team-mates, Gavaskar has selected 10 of which only eight actually played Test cricket. The famed quartet of Bedi, Prasanna, Venkataraghavan and Chandrashekhar have pride of place as does brother-in-law Gundappa Vishwanath. Kap. Dev. Mohin-

der Amarnath and Syed Kirmani comprise the middle order. The two surprise inclusions are Padmakar Shivalkar from Bombay and Haryana's Rajinder Goel.

But taken as a whole, Gavaskar's book is a disappointment. Much of what he writes is already well known or documented and even snippets of personal relationships or brushes with the players he idolises are hardly of the earth-shaking variety. Gavaskar himself was pretty much of an introvert on tours and his personal contacts with the cricketers he discusses are few and far between. Perhaps because he genuinely admires the people he has written about, Gavaskar has nothing but praise for each one of them, as cricketers and as people, though it is widely known that at least some of the idols in the book had never heard of Emily Post and were unpleasant personalities on and off the field.

Regretful Incident: Perhaps the only item of value that is new involves Gavaskar's

controversial decision to walk off the field during the Melbourne Test match against Australia in 1980. Gavaskar describes that entire ugly incident in some detail and the events that led up to his act. "When the umpire did not reverse his decision (a leg before appeal by Lillee which Gavaskar says came off the inside edge of his bat) a lot of anger was boiling inside me," writes Gavaskar, "when I walked past Chetan (Chauhan) I heard Lillee utter

one of his profanities and it was then that I lost my balance of mind and told Chetan to walk off with me." Gavaskar, however, admits that it was "one of the most regrettable incidents of my life...there was no justification for my action and I realise now that I did not behave as a captain and sportsman should."

Apart from that one frank self-appraisal, Gavaskar glosses over his long innings as India's captain which was not without its controversies. But since he is only writing about individual personalities, he could be excused, though it would certainly have done the book no harm if he had been more hard-hitting and objective in his appraisals. Even the style is dry and factual without any literary merit. It is much like one of his copybook forward defensive strokes. But then, Gavaskar is Gavaskar and any analysis by him of the world's cricketing greats deserves special consideration. Ironically enough, much of the book's success will depend on Gavaskar's own success in the current series. But his contribution to the game is already so enormous that this is one toss that no cricket lover would wish him to lose. —DILIP BOBB



Gavaskar: toss-up

community of *chitrakaras* to a pro-
which was traditionally their own but
they had abandoned under compel-
circumstances."

Cultural Rediscoveries: Although the
is titled *Puri Paintings*, the research
ntly takes us into other aspects of
culture. We learn that Chodaganga,
lder of the Jagannath temple (India's
Vishnu temple) was himself a Shaiva.
author's footnotes, readers share the
his discoveries. Writing on 'Convent-
Pata', Das elaborates on the Oriya
which is stylistically different from the
of the other traditions. "In medieval
the pointed nose has been consid-
attribute of beauty.... If we take a
of castes... and arrange them in the
of the average nasal index, so that the
with the finest nose shall be at the top,
with the coarsest at the bottom of
it will be found that this order
ntially corresponds with the accepted
of social precedence.... Thus it is scar-
paradox to lay down as a law of the
organisation in eastern India that a
social status varies in inverse ratio to
th of his nose."

this age when books are designed
beauty, the publishers of Das's book,
Heinemann, need to be woken up.
ave made a mess of the interesting
material, squeezing it ungracefully
ht full pages. At a price of Rs 250,
ould have been expected, specially
e rest of the book is in black and
nd not printed on art paper. A more
porary design with standardised
s could have done the needful: cros-
sis with a coffee-table look.

Staying Style: Happily, the present-
tus of the *chitrakaras* is better than
edecessors. But in his conclusion J.P.
rms us of a likely complacency. "A
owered committee recently recom-
the production and sale of photo-
of the deities in different sizes and in
s (guises) duly authenticated by
aging committee of the Jagannath
Such recommendations forget that
ne too distant past the sale of chro-
graphs had brought ruin to the *ch-*
the temple." What the author does not ment-
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—AMAN NATH



Publicity shy Kennedy Jr: magical tag

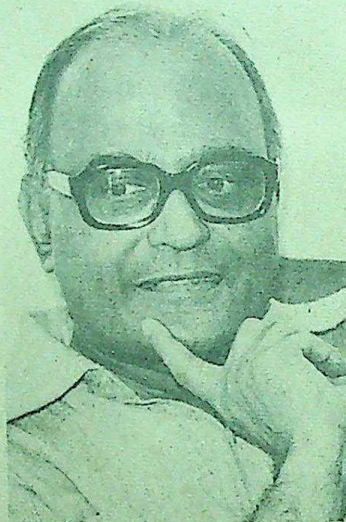
■ Nothing distinguished the tall, blond and reticent young man from the crowd at one of the capital's high-powered cocktail parties. Well, nothing but his name which was passed around in hushed tones like a mesmeric mantra. Yes, gasped one, it is **John F. Kennedy Jr.**, the son of the late president of the US John F. Kennedy and the enigmatic and elusive Jackie Kennedy Onassis. Kennedy Jr who's still in college back home is in India for an eight-month

stay. His mission: to study Indian political thought. His plans which are yet to be worked out, include visiting various universities in India and meeting some political leaders to get their viewpoints on the subject he is researching. Publicity shy, the brown-suited, but extremely affable Kennedy Jr mumbled: "I have yet to work out how I'll use my time here. At the moment I'm enjoying myself." Not unusual for a person with the magical Kennedy tag.

■ They have them in the swinging city of Bombay but never with so much fanfare and show. But there's always a first time if you have the money and the time and of course a success story as essential support. Last fortnight, **Poornachandra Rao**, one of the big producers on the south Indian film industry and the man who made a big leap into Bombay films with his *Andhaa Kaanoon*, celebrated the silver jubilee of the film with the kind of pomp and show rare for a jubilee function. Rao flew in 200 guests from all over India at his expense, paid for their hotel accommodation and hosted a lavish banquet at a local 5-star hotel for 600 people. The impressive guest list consisted of names like Amitabh Bachchan, Shivaji Ganesan, Kamalahasan, Rajnikant, Prem Nazir, Sridevi and a host of other top stars and fellow

producers. The estimated cost of the show: Rs 5 lakh. And a surprise announcement: Rao launched his next venture which is starring Amitabh Bachchan.

■ He was probably India's first whiz-kid when he took over, at the age of 26, as the economist and assistant chief in the problems and policies division of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But then, for **Dr Indraprasad Gordhanbhai Patel**, 59, honours are nothing new. Last fortnight, Patel added another feather to his cap: he was appointed the director of the prestigious London School of Economics (LSE), the first time an Indian takes on this post. Patel, who is currently the director of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad



Patel: London bound

has had a career, serving both abroad. With a doctorate from Cambridge University, a stint at Harvard, Patel served as advisor to the Finance Minister, the Planning Commission as well as the governor of the Reserve Bank of India, from where he resigned in 1982. Patel's new post, although, says a lot for his impeccable credentials, has never being dogged by controversy even before he takes over next October. Members of the LSE union feel that his appointment is influenced by the decision the authorities taken a few years back, that overseas students should be charged more fees than local students. Patel seemed unaffected by the controversy. "The LSE has always valued excellence in an institution which encourages academic freedom. It will make every effort to ensure that there is no conflict between resident and non-resident students."

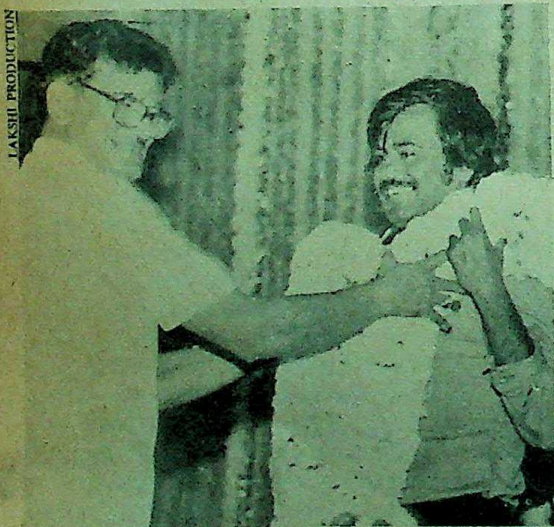
SIGN POSTS

■ **Appointed:** Noted filmmaker Hrishikesh Mukherjee has been appointed the new chairman of the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). Apart from Mukherjee's appointment, producer Shashi Kapoor and director Aparna Sen have been nominated to the board of directors of the NFDC.

■ **Awarded:** W.R. Inge, director of the Indian Institute of Roman Studies, has been awarded the Land Nehru Award for his contribution to and promotion of Indo-Soviet relations. He received an award of Rs 10,000 and a trip to the Soviet Union.

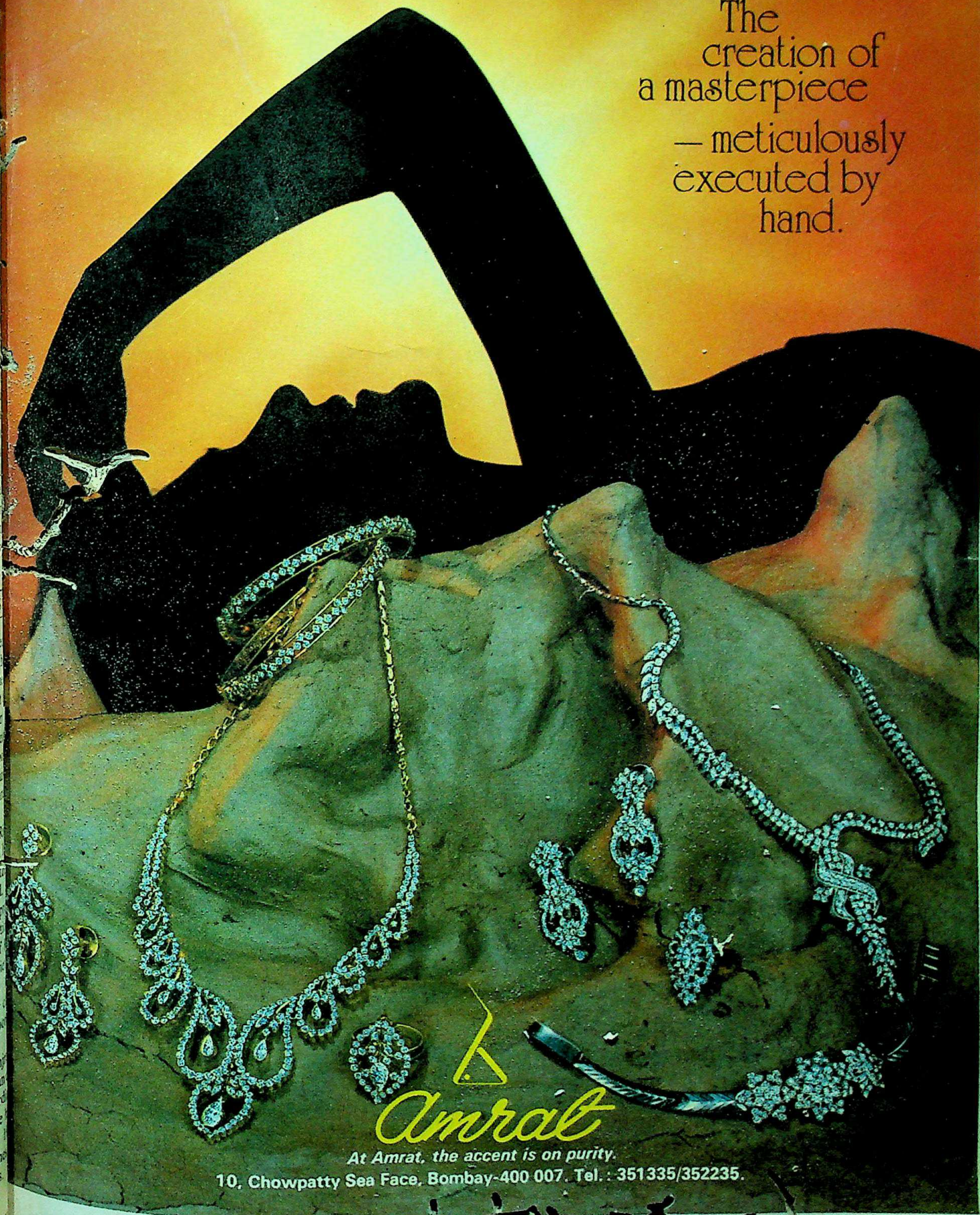
■ **Resigned:** N.S. Chatterjee has resigned from the post of the director of the Shipping Corporation of India.

■ **Died:** Vijay Manjhi, a front-ranking Indian cricketer of yesteryears, of cardiac failure in Madras. He made his debut in Test cricket in 1955 and played 55 Test matches, scoring a total of 3,206 runs.



Rao garlanding Rajnikant (left) and the superstar line-up at the jubilee function (from left), Bachchan, Jayapadma, Sripriya and Kamalahasan: lavish show

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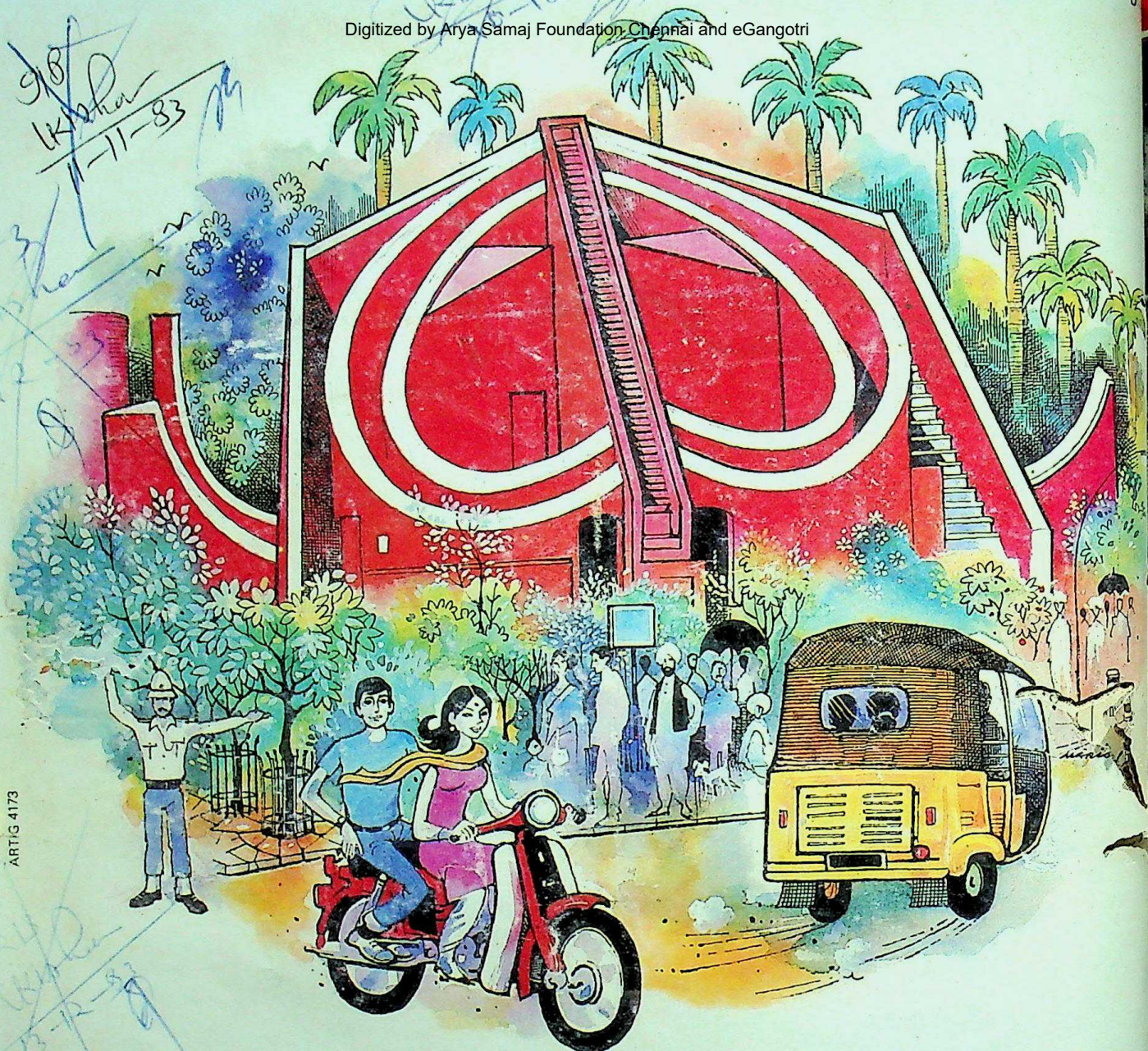
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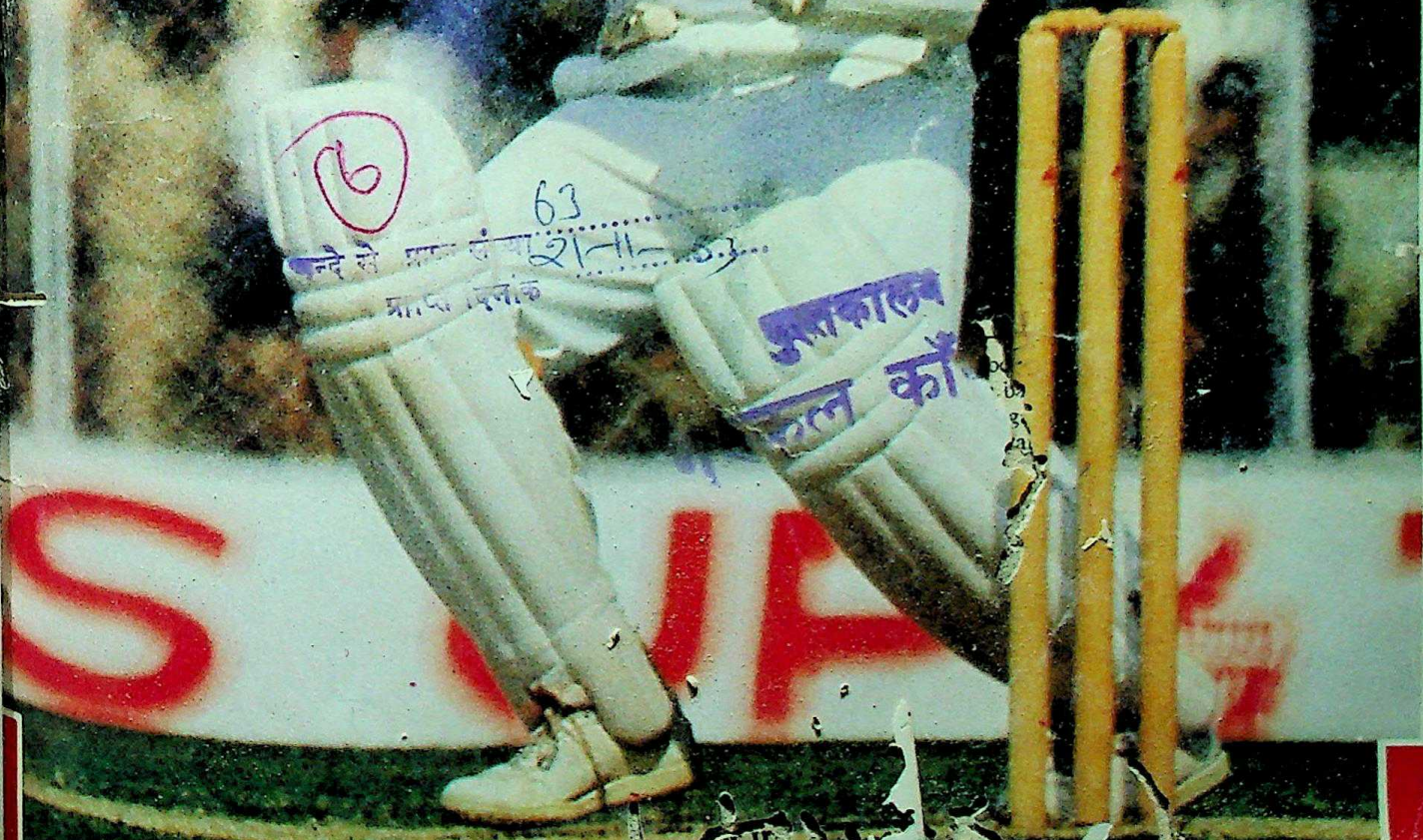
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PHOTOGRAPH BY BHAWAN SINGH

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1983



Sunil Gavaskar

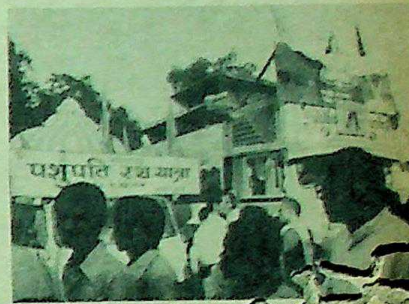
In a mere 94 balls and 180 frenetic minutes, Sunil Gavaskar on October 29 created a landmark by equalling Bradman's record of 29 Test centuries, in the current series against the West Indies. Just as detractors had begun to dismiss him as a spent force, he staged an electrifying comeback. In a momentous 13-year cricket career, his masterly stroke-play has put him and India on the world cricket map.
Cover Story • Page 62



Tallow

On the eve of Parliament's winter session, the four-month-old tallow controversy got a fresh lease of life with the opposition parties declaring it the major issue in the next election. Lost in the acrimony was the basic truth that the controversy has been blown out of all proportion by self-serving politicians.

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Hinduism

Stretching from Hardwar, Nepal and the North-east to the temple towns of Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, as many as 92 religious caravans are rolling across the country this fortnight. Known as *Ekatmata Yagna*—or rite for the union of souls—this is the biggest show in recent times put up by Hindu revivalist organisations.

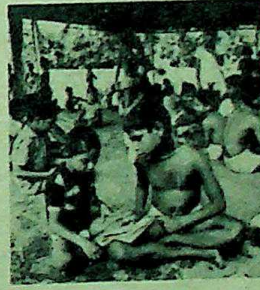
Special Report • Page 82



Massage Parlours

Countless health clubs and massage parlours offering sexual services have mushroomed in Madras over the last few years and, in spite of countless raids on them by the police, are on the increase. Drawing around 300 customers per day, the patrons of the 60-odd parlours have even filed petitions in court to prevent police raids. By all accounts, business is booming.

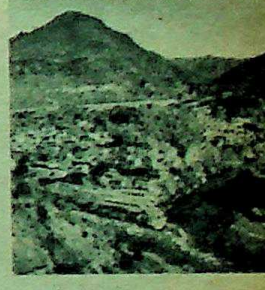
Living • Page 59



Gurukul Kangri

Ignored by modern society, on the banks of the Chhoti Ganga near Hardwar lies Swamy Shradhanand's 60-year-old Gurukul Kangri. Despite severe financial problems and an uncertain future, the Vedic institution continues to educate, generation after generation of brahmacharis in a culture that has almost been forgotten.

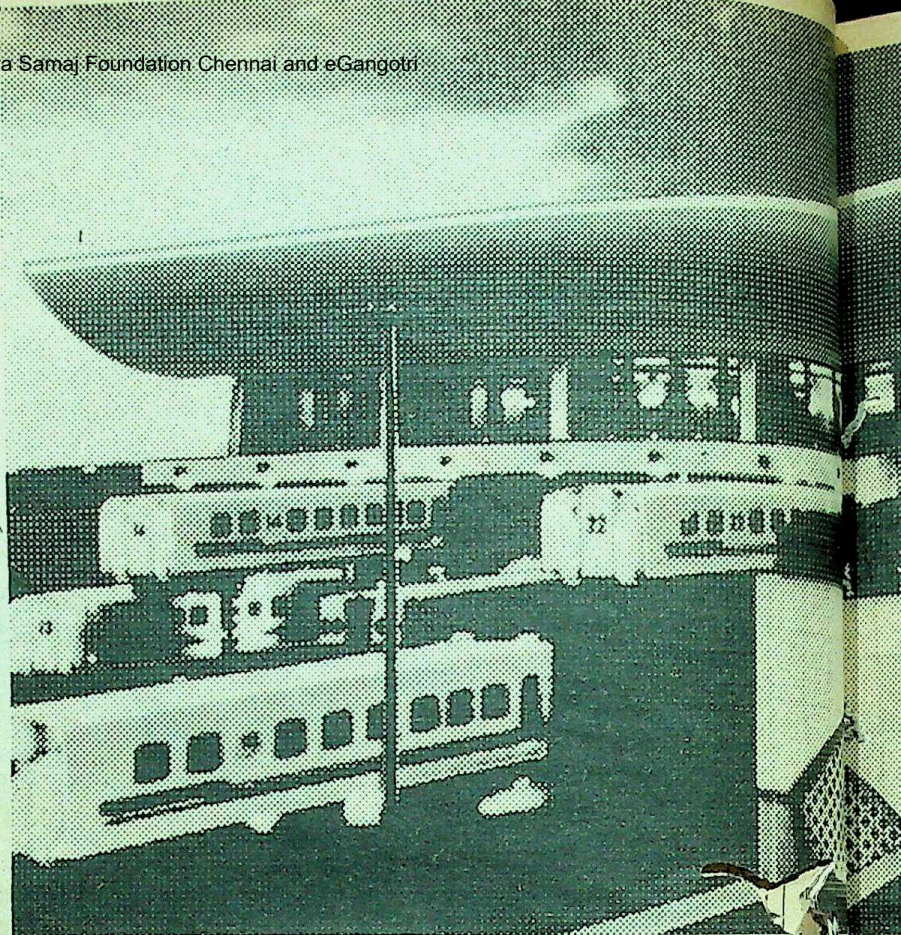
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Vishnuprayag Dam

When the Uttar Pradesh Government decided to embark upon its most ambitious project—the construction of the highest dam in Asia at Vishnuprayag, it expected to wipe out a chronic power shortfall in the region. Now with Rs 10 crore down the drain and a growing awareness that it might prove ecologically disastrous, the very feasibility of the project is in question.

Environment • Page 142



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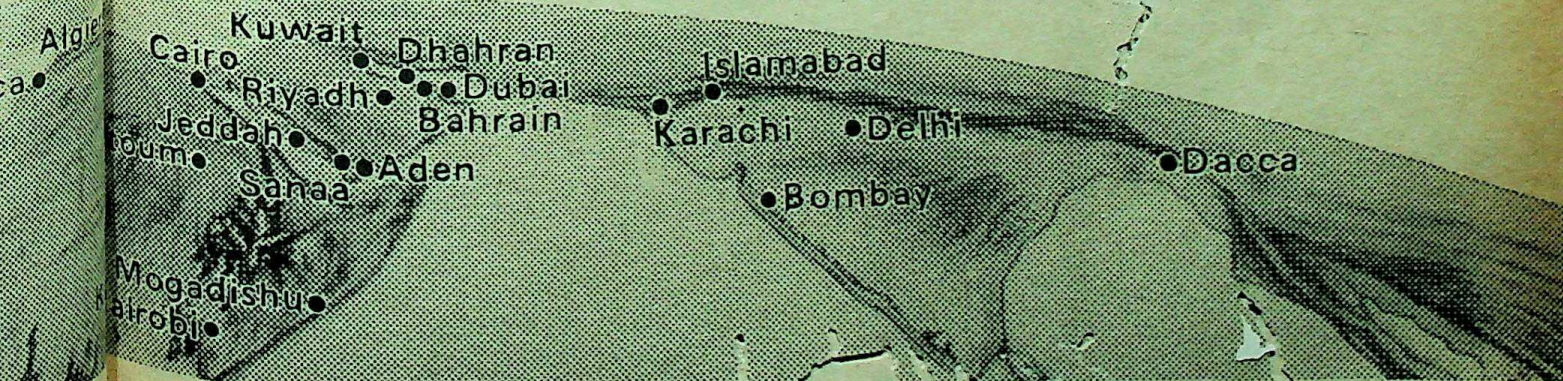
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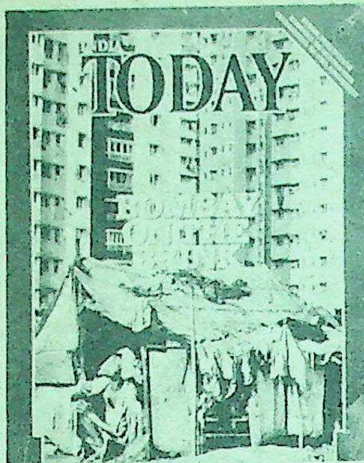
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BOMBAY BLUES

Thanks to the shortsightedness of people who matter, Bombay, the country's commercial capital, has degenerated into India's slum capital (Bombay on the Brink; November 15).

Kansur-Sirsi (Karnataka) *G.N. Sharma*

■ No single organisation can save Bombay. The Central and state governments should pool their resources and create jobs outside Bombay so that some of the city's population moves out.

Bombay *D.K. Shishadiya*

■ People who dream about landing jobs in Bombay will now think twice before doing any such foolish thing.

Ahmedabad *B. Palani*

■ If the film industry is moved out of Bombay lock, stock, and barrel, a major nuisance would be removed from the city. It ill behoves Dev Anand, a skinny and pennyless lad who came from an obscure village called Gurdaspur to Bombay in 1945 and achieved name, fame and money there to talk about the city as he does. But that is precisely what Bombay is all about.

Allahabad *Archana Jaiswal*

BANKING ON IT

In his article "Throwing Away the Crutches" (November 15), Jay Dubashi snobbishly ignores several factors for the continued role of the World Bank as the economic saviour of many developing countries. We live in a world where life is not fair to everybody. I am glad that we have institutions like the World Bank which do an excellent job in assisting the less fortunate among the comity of nations.

Gastonia (North Carolina, USA)

Pradeep K. Patnaik

BIRD-WATCHER

Your article on Salim Ali (A Rare Bird, October 31) was racy and wholesome. For

many years he was a one-man army in the jungles in search of birds. By befriended Loke Wan Tho, a millionaire bird photographer who financed ornithological expedition and associated with Dr S. Dillon Ripley, Ali's wife who helped him most and educated in England, she rose with Ali in the tough terrain of princely states of Hyderabad, Indore and Bhopal among others. enough she died in 1939 without the fruits of her husband's labour. Hyderabad

STRATEGIC VIEWS

The best solution to the Punjab (Cover Story, October 31) will be the demand for Khalistan. All Khalistan. From Harchand Singh to Khushwant Singh, no Sikh unequivocally condemned the Khalistan or the atrocities being in its name. The establishment will be a blessing in disguise for India provided we do not repeat the committed at the time of the Pakistan. No Sikh should remain in this country which are denied to other citizens ctioning as a fifth column for Kh Koovapadi (Kerala)

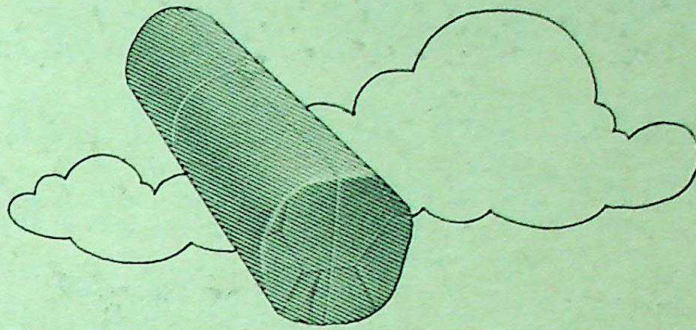
■ What is really needed is a strategy by the Central Government desire of the political parties to problem from the point of view country's interests and not narrow interests. Calcutta

■ The Akalis should be forced their morcha to create a concrete sphere in Punjab so that all concerned around the table and negotiate settlement. The Akalis should try confidence of the Punjabi Hindu killing them. Every act of violence the cleavage between the Hindu and Sikhs. It will not then be possible Akalis to win elections to form a ment, which is, after all, their final are not really interested in Sikh Akali rule. Rohtak

■ The Akalis and the Government have to give up their respective they really want to solve the problem. It is important to realise that is not enough to make a nation more than enough to undo decades and destroy it. Patiala

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ENDING TAGORE

By running down Rabindranath
Tagore, are we not betraying the typical
inferiority complex of the Indian race (The
Riddle, October 31)? If Ghosh is
to do to Tagore what the Polish
government is doing to Lech Walesa, it is an
act of futility.

Vineet Kothari

Who is this Nityapriya Ghosh anyway?
Apparently, his pseudo-intellectualism may
be the cranks in his neighbourhood,
certainly not the educated Indians.
Ghosh should get hold of at least an
edited version of Tagore's writings and
read them once. I bet he will keep his mouth
shut for ever.

Aparisim Ghosh

Why rake up a meaningless controversy
on Tagore? Tagore simply deserved
honour more than anyone at that point
in time. His work will continue to be re-
membered for a long time to come.

N.A. Sulaiman

Some years after Satyajit Ray's passing
(long may he live!), some obscure
'investigative' treatise on the murky
circumstances under which Ray had received
many international awards. It will be
noted that he had many personal friends in
Calcutta which awarded him the honours,
that he entertained these gentlemen to
dinner whenever they visited Calcutta. And
TODAY shall devote three whole pages
to the controversy created in Bengal.

Delhi

S. Kanjilal

This is only an attempt on the part of
Nityapriya Ghosh, a known figure in
Calcutta's intellectual circles, to make him-
self prominent by attacking Tagore.

Anupam Set

I have rarely read a more obfuscating
article than the one on Tagore. It may be
for the Marxists to wage a war on
Tagore, Vivekananda, Tagore and com-
pany to wash the Bengali brain of the
masses to form a new rubbish, but I never expected
TODAY to be taken for a ride. Even if
Tagore did enjoy royal help, is it the case that
he was not up to the mark? The man who
heeded the modernisation of Bengali ve-
rse and prose, wrote countless short stories,
novels, plays, biographies and literary essays
to the highest standard, in addition to the
hundreds of poems and songs on love, nature,
man and his country, deserved less
thoughtless treatment from a journal of your
standing.

Mary (Karnataka)

Urmimala Sarkar

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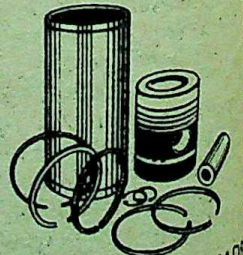
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A Blown Up Affair

INDIAN politicians are playing with fire. The controversy ignited over the so-called "beef" tallow issue is a condemnable example of the cynical disregard for the truth which has come to infect the broad majority of their tribe. The men and women who make up the leadership of the political parties should know better than to peddle misinformation in the belief that their actions will win them electoral support. Nothing could be more shortsighted, for the results of their actions are already grievous. In large parts of northern India, where the issue is being most hotly debated, the mood has turned ugly with most people willing to believe that beef is being widely mixed with vanaspati. Temples have refused to accept offerings of sweets not prepared in identifiable vegetable oils, and restaurants across the Hindi heartland have pulled down notices announcing the use of vanaspati in their cooking. Producers of vanaspati have resorted to newspaper advertisements in defence of their product and religious leaders have been persuaded to voice the opinion that the accidental consumption of the adulterated product does not pollute the user. And, religious processions are criss-crossing the country in the belief that there exists a threat to the Hindu religion.

The issue is not vanaspati. It is not religion. It is that of politicians playing wantonly with beliefs that lie close to the core of Hinduism. Far from defogging the controversy, they are adding it more, blaming one another for what is essentially a blown-up affair. The Opposition, divided and rudderless, feels that it has at last an election issue with which to whip Congress(I) which, discomfited and with its back to the wall, is trying to make out that it was during the Janata period that the import of tallow was open to misuse.

All this is sheer hypocrisy. The import of tallow into India has been legal since 1964 till the ban imposed on it last August. It has been a canalised item, open to private traders under certain conditions. The regulations, like all others dreamt up by the country's bureaucracy, have loopholes, and some enterprising importers have twisted them to their own ends. It is well to remember that adulteration and misuse of licenses are made possible precisely because of the corrupt and cumbersome

administrative leviathan presided over by the very politicians who are now making the loudest noise. The system is subverted only with the connivance of politicians and is eaten through with corruption chiefly because of their bottomless appetite for black money. It is no coincidence that the one man most prominently incarcerated in the tallow affair is known to be close to ruling politicians.

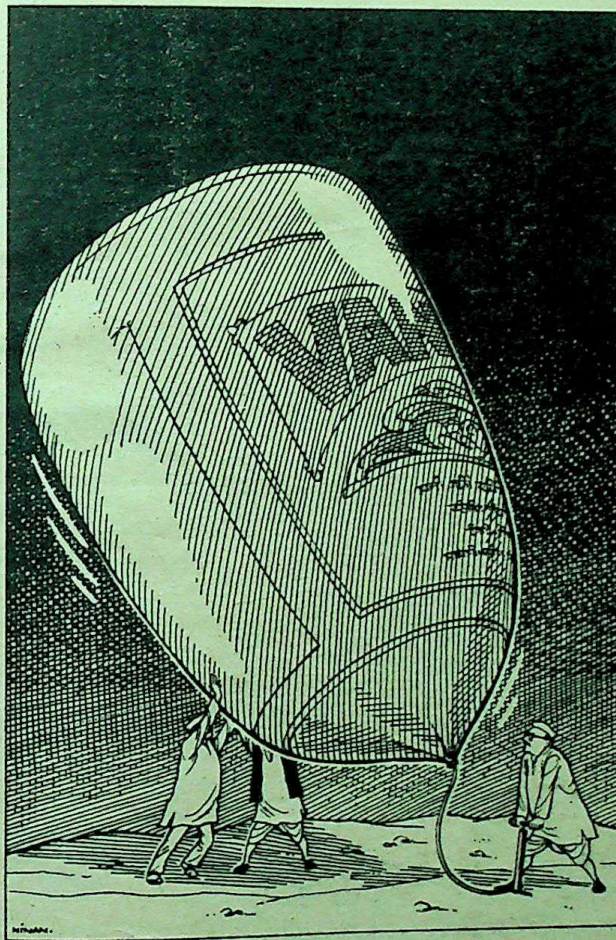
Instead of trying to shout down one another, the country's politicians owe it to the people who put them in Parliament to defuse what is already an explosive issue. Adulteration is all too

common a crime, but vanaspati has been found adulterated in just two—and no more than two—cases (in another three separate incidents, tallow was found in containers normally used for vanaspati) and that several thousand checks across the length and breadth of the country failed to show up any other mischief. It is also necessary to remember that the tallow being imported is inedible, that it is easy to detect, that as an industrial raw material it is never sold in the market place as beef or mutton tallow but as a mixture of various animal fats conforming to industrial specifications. The nomenclature "mutton" and "beef" tallow, which in essence are exactly the same sort of material, were coined by Indian importers, including the State Trading Corporation, to cope with red tape.

Nor is this something that has suddenly been sprung on an unsuspecting Indian people. Tallow is used all over the world to make soap and grease, and has been used for this purpose—and this purpose alone—in India for two decades. It is just

like one of several products of everyday use—like white sugar, medicine capsules, glycerine, edible jelly, insulin, cheese and shoes to name some—which use products extracted from animals, especially the cow.

The tallow controversy has deflected the debate from reason and hurt Hindu sentiments not because there is substance to the anxieties being expressed but because of the words and deeds of politicians. In the coming weeks Parliament will provide them with another forum in which to give vent to their motivated campaigns. But if they do not restrain themselves, the fire may catch, and will surely singe the hand that lit it.



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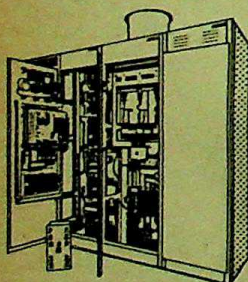
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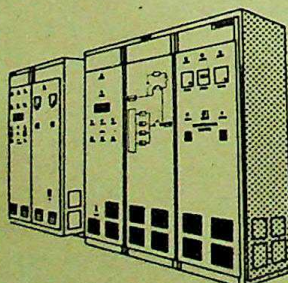
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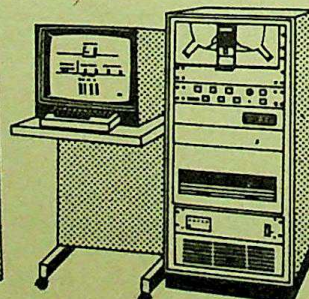
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VOICES

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➤ There is no Pakistan in Kashmir. If Pakistan is being created it is in Delhi.
—Dr Farooq Abdullah at a convention in Delhi

➤ Civil liberties and a Marxist state can never coexist. To talk of Marxist democracy is like talking of boiling ice cream.

—Nani Palkhivala in *India Today*

➤ The health of the Congress(I) will not improve if the press is to be kinder to it so long as its health does not improve, its image cannot and will not.

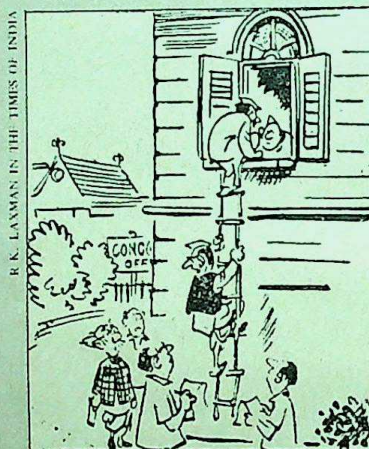
—Girilal Jain in *The Times of India*

➤ Ram Jethmalani is an insane man. What is the value of his statements when himself is not a sane man? Do you consider my mind to be disintegrated?

—Charan Singh in *Star of India*

➤ I will never say (that Swraj Paui is an undesirable). He is a good friend among the very few Indians settled abroad who have really gone into industry and done a good job of it.

—H.P. Nanda in *Current History*



Don't be silly—there's no secret meeting, no sinister move to topple the C.M.!—We had just gone to attend an informal tea party!

➤ Datta Samant is the most unscrupulous and unreliable person. A stooge of mill owners.

—Bai Thackeray in *Bombay Mirror*

➤ I am not an archaeologist or a grave-digger. The past doesn't speak to me as a designer. I have less interest in it.

—Architect Charles Correa in *Gentle*

➤ The tempo (in a film) should be so fast that the audience doesn't have time to think. The day I give them time to think, that will be my doom. Don't give them time to dwell on the illogicality of the story, just heap item after item.

—Manmohan Desai in *Filmfare*

➤ Hardly five per cent of our so-called producers are really producers. Most of them are just matrimonial makers who want to make kitchen maids.

—Shashi Kapoor in *Star of India*

➤ One second with this person is like getting pregnant and carrying his baby. It's like talking to him and all what he said I have captured in my stomach and it is growing inside me.

—Rekha in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

➤ Jim (Ivory) and I don't see ourselves as Indian, British or American film makers. We belong to the nation of Merchant-Ivory Productions.

—Ismael Merchant in *The Sunday Express*

➤ Sex (in films) is not harmful as violence is, because violence is imitative. It is against priggishness. Kissing should be allowed.

—Hrishikesh Mukherjee in *The Sunday Observer*

➤ Thousands of accidents happen in this country... but the one I met with was proportionately magnified... I did not enjoy the same press space even during my heyday or when I received the Padmashree!

—Gemini Ganesan in *Star of India*

➤ I am really a mama's girl. For her I'm ready to jilt anybody—my lover, friend, career. No one on this earth can push me or take me for granted.

—Amrita Singh in *Star of India*

➤ I have always been a victim of unfair trade practices because I am a careless buyer. I buy the first thing the shopkeeper offers and find that it is sub-standard.

—Vice-President M. Hidayatullah at a trade meet in Bombay



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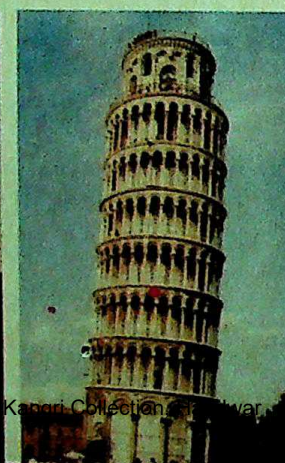
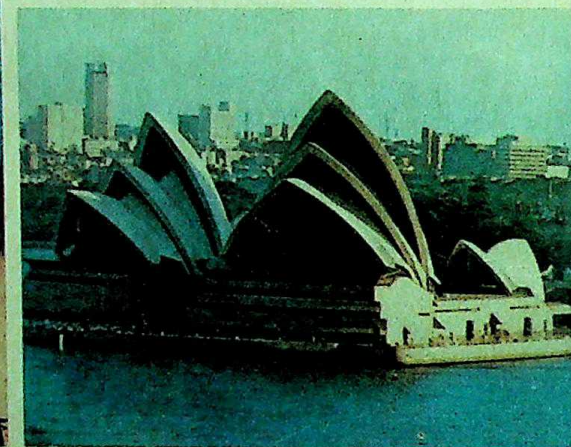
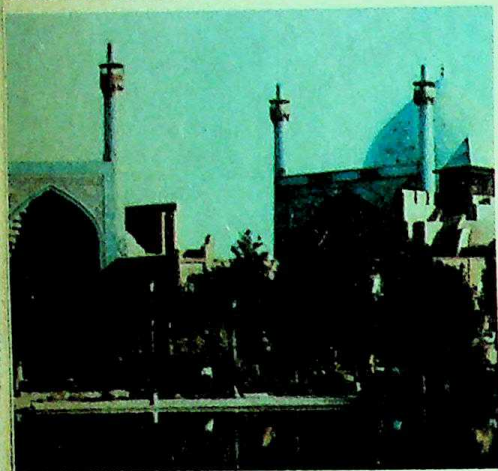


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CONGRESS(I)

Return Of The Prodigals

THE PRODIGALS are trooping back to the fold. Last fortnight, Mrs Gandhi admitted into her party Hitendra Desai, former Union minister from Gujarat, who had been in the other camp when the Congress split for the first time in 1969. Soon afterwards, she invited former West Bengal chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray to New Delhi for talks. And her emissaries were busy wooing Harijan leader Jagjivan Ram. The homecoming drive was the follow-up to Mrs Gandhi's clarification call to all former Congressmen to come together before the Congress centenary celebrations in 1985. As Youth Congress(I) President Tariq Anwar puts it poetically: "The Congress(I) led by Mrs Gandhi is like an ocean and the various political leaders like rivers merge into it. It doesn't lose its own vastness."

That metaphor apart, there is more to the prodigals' return than the desire to celebrate 100 years of Congress culture unitedly. This is made clear from the list that party sources say that Rajiv Gandhi has put together: over 50 former Congressmen of national and state prominence, who can provide the party with much-needed clout when it comes to opposition-bashing and elections. The list includes, besides Ray and Jagjivan Ram, Nandini Satpathy from Orissa, Ram Lakhan Yadav from Bihar, Vengal Rao from Andhra Pradesh, S. Bangarappa from Karnataka and Shyama Charan Shukla from Madhya Pradesh. The strategy has already had some success: Abdul Ghafoor of Bihar and Priya Ranjan Das Munshi of West Bengal, readmitted to the Congress(I) recently, have proved effective in countering opposition onslaughts and helping the party expand its base in these states. Admits Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, AICC(I) general secretary: "Our main objective is to supplement the leadership at the state level."

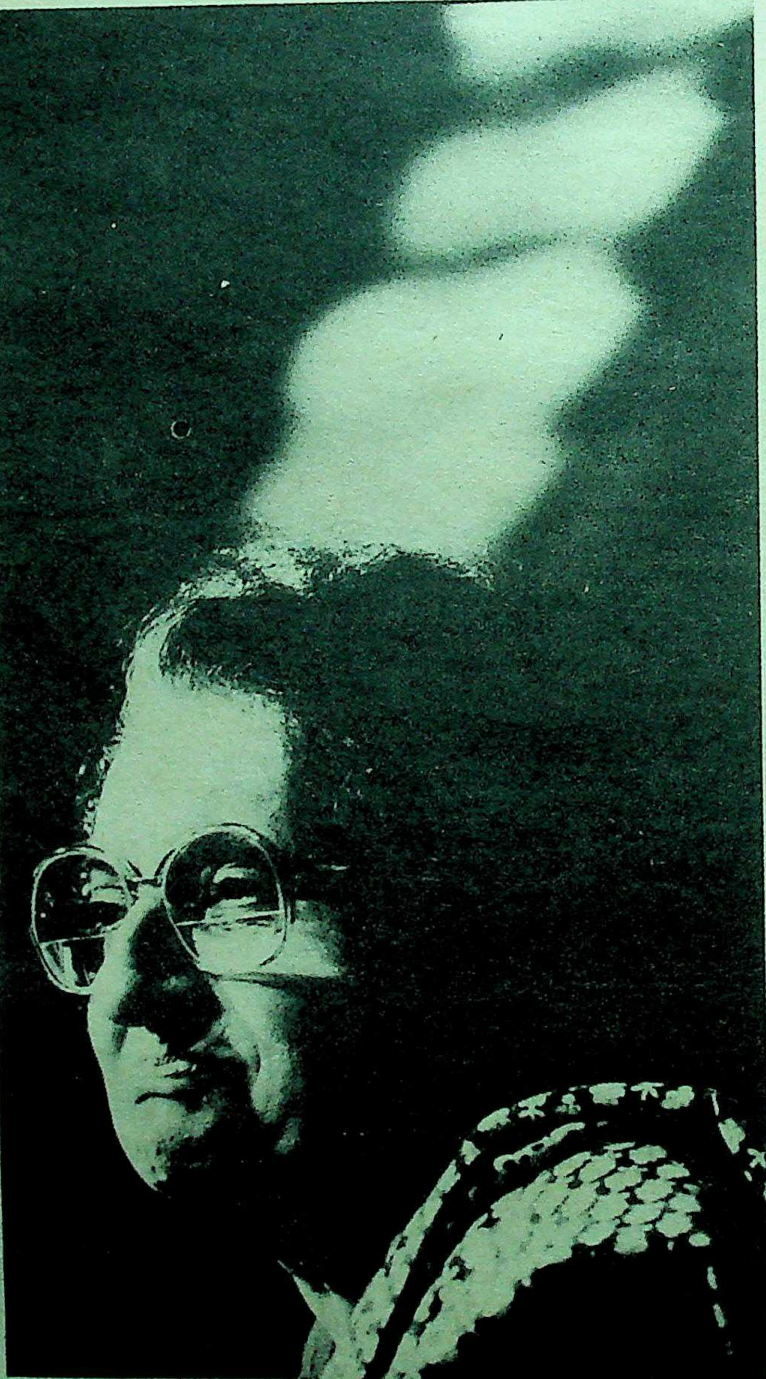
The latest party project is a revival of the party's earlier open door policy adopted after Mrs Gandhi's 1980 return to power. Between January 1980 and September 1983, she welcomed to her party powerful Congressmen such as former Union ministers Y.B. Chavan, K.C. Pant, Bali Ram Bhagat, Mohammed Shafi Qureshi and, the most recent, Desai. The Congress(I) was also able to form governments in Kerala, Hima-

chal Pradesh and Haryana with other estranged Congressmen who in search of sinecures.

Attempts were made to rope in from states where chief ministers and Congress committees were having a falling out. The induction of Qureshi, Pant and Desai was obviously done on the reasoning that this would help the local leadership to date its hold on things. But Mrs Gandhi care not to encourage dissenters in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. Chief ministers and the Congress(I) opposed readmitting those who abandoned Mrs Gandhi in the trial years of 1977. For instance, in Madhya Pradesh, the pro-chief minister group consistently scuttled Mrs Gandhi's admission of Shukla, a former minister. Similarly, in West Bengal, Satpathy's overtures met with stiff resistance to her return.

But times have changed. Only those who were in the party in 1969 are not to be readmitted. One reason which Congress(I) leaders cite for the readmission drive is the Sanjay political machine which dominates the party at the state and district level. After veteran Congressmen like P.V. Narayana Murthy and Biju Patnaik, Mrs Gandhi groomed his own abrasive troupe of young men who rode to power in the 1980s. They proved to be good soldiers but bad generals, and the organisation started to splinter. Pieces after Sanjay's death, all who were in the party in 1969, now a Central minister, said we look back we feel like an old man. Perhaps a historical moment has won the election with the Congress(I) the Sanjay brand of politics. I have seen because the principles and subsequent development made the Nehru brand party will be completely different. However, But later on it was proved the Sanjay brand had no utility and could not be sustained upon for sustaining the national character of the Congress.

Conditions: Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv started around for Congress had pockets of influence.



• Mrs Gandhi: strategy of reconciliation

se image was untarnished by major scan-
At party meetings, there was consensus
admitting new people, opinion varied on
conditions to be set. It was emphasised in
recent meeting of top Congress(I) leaders
Central ministers that the party should
to its earlier policy of closing doors on
who were active against Mrs Gandhi
1969 and particularly during the Janata
time. However, the leadership eventually
down specific guidelines:

those who deposed before commissions
pointed in the Janata regime would be wa-
ed a few months before they are admitted.
none would be given important posts,
her in the government nor in the party;



Das Munshi (left) and Qureshi: tactical influence

only those who never spoke against Mrs
which Gandhi in public would be admitted;
or the re anyone facing graft charges and without
Sanjay political base would not be considered;
nates le politicians with links to communal and
d distri me right and left wing organisations
Congressld not be considered.

Gandhi
own
THE LITMUS test appears to be un-
flinching loyalty to Mrs Gandhi, not
the organisation. As all the stalwarts,
Brahmananda Reddy—who expelled
Gandhi from the Congress—A.K.
Gandhi, all were asked to express their faith
al minister leadership and ideals. Even the usually
x we feel Das Munshi obliged docilely: "I am
historical ally an opposition worker in West Ben-
ion with the can fight Marxist politics only through
brand of Congress(I) led by Prime Minister Indira
se the Engh. I have always believed in Congress
ent devel ples and values and my coming back to
thru brand party will help me in working for these
pletely res ples."

However, not everyone looks kindly
the prodigals' return: several of the
ger leaders feel ignored. During the
AICC(I) Bombay session, the new en-
were not only seated on the dais but
allowed to speak on important subjects
the loyalists took a back seat. Said a
Congress(I) leader after the session:
respect the decision of our leaders but
and ourselves uncomfortable in the com-

pany of those who were abusing us only
recently. Now that the elections are coming
they want to join us so that they can claim
tickets and throw us out."

Party Tensions: There are indications
that the strategy might cause more problems
than it solves. In Gujarat, Hitendra Desai's
coming has jolted Chief Minister Madha-
vsinh Solanki. Solanki has, of course,
welcomed Desai but his supporters have lost
no time complaining to senior Congress(I)
leaders. They feel that they will not be able to
campaign shoulder to shoulder with some-
body who has been fighting them since 1969.
Even the state PCC(I) opposed his read-
mission, which had ultimately to be an-
nounced from AICC(I) headquarters in New
Delhi.

The story is repeated in other states.
Antony and Pant seldom attend functions
organised by the state bodies because they
are either not invited or, when invited, are
made to be part of the background. They are
shunted to the front only when Mrs Gandhi
or Rajiv Gandhi are present. Aware of the
hostility, the 'old guards' are trying to create
their own base. When Pant visited Uttar
Pradesh a few months ago after his
readmission, over 200 Congress workers
assembled at Lucknow airport to cheer the
leader.

Pant's presence cannot but have made
others uneasy: Union Industry Minister
N.D. Tiwari because he won the Nainital Lok
Sabha seat by trouncing Pant and Chief
Minister Sripat Misra, annoyed about Pant's
criticism of the state electricity board's erratic
functioning. Tiwari and Misra kept quiet, but



(Clockwise from top left) Ram, Satpathy,
Ray and Bangarappa: waiting game.

their supporters inevitably complained to the
high command.

With such tensions, Mrs Gandhi and
Rajiv are, understandably, stepping cau-
tiously. Although over 200 former Congres-
smen have joined the ruling party since 1980,
only Pant and Chavan have been rewarded
with ornamental positions. The others have
had to be content with the 25 paise receipt as
testimony to their new-found status as Cong-
ress(I) members. Antony, for instance,
helped pull down the Marxist-led govern-
ment in Kerala over two years ago but has
not been assigned any important job after
returning to Mrs Gandhi's side.

Shrewd Tactics: Mrs Gandhi has, how-

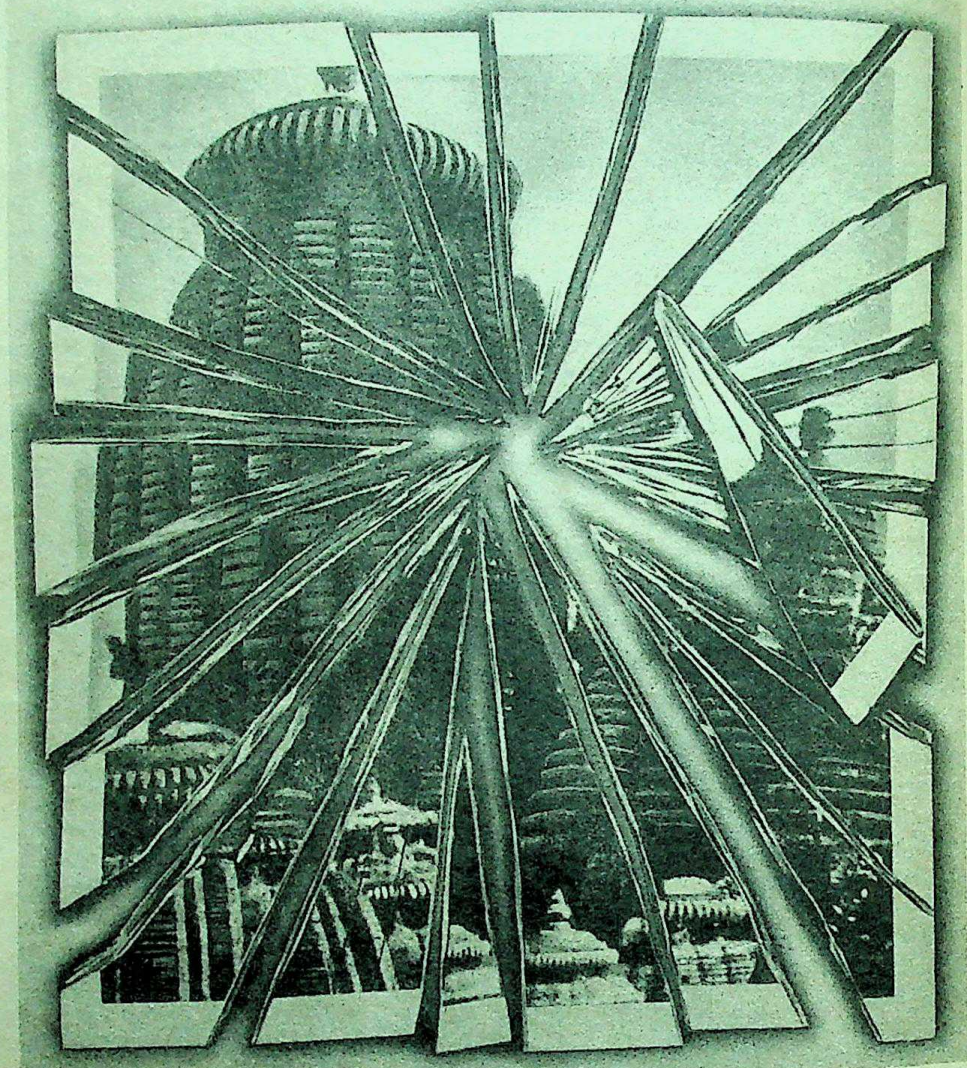


Das Munshi (left) and Desai: coming home

ever, kept them in good humour by asking
them to deliver speeches in the Congress(I)
camps and at rallies and by letting them
handle banal issues like reviews of the
20-point programme implementation in
their constituencies. Says Bajpai: "Ours is a
huge organisation where each individual can
contribute a lot to growth losing his own in-
dividual entity." G.K. Moopnar, another
AICC(I) general secretary adds: "One should
not read too much politics into the recent ad-
missions. Each political party would like to
see its ranks swelling. We are definitely con-
sidering those for admission who genuinely
believe in our ideals and in the leadership of
Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. But each case
is considered on merit alone."

Despite minor protests in the party, Mrs
Gandhi and Rajiv seem determined to carry
out their programme. According to
Congress(I) leaders, the majority of the listed
Congressmen will be back in the party fold
before the plenary session in Calcutta in
December. Mrs Gandhi is likely to spring a
surprise there by bringing an impressive
number of big names to the jamboree. One
reason for the rush is a similar unity call by
Mir Qasim of Jammu & Kashmir. But
while Qasim has yet to open his account, Mrs
Gandhi has clearly stolen a march over
everyone else, once again proving that she can
use both the carrot and the stick more
effectively than any other political leader in
the country.

—PRABHU CHAWLA



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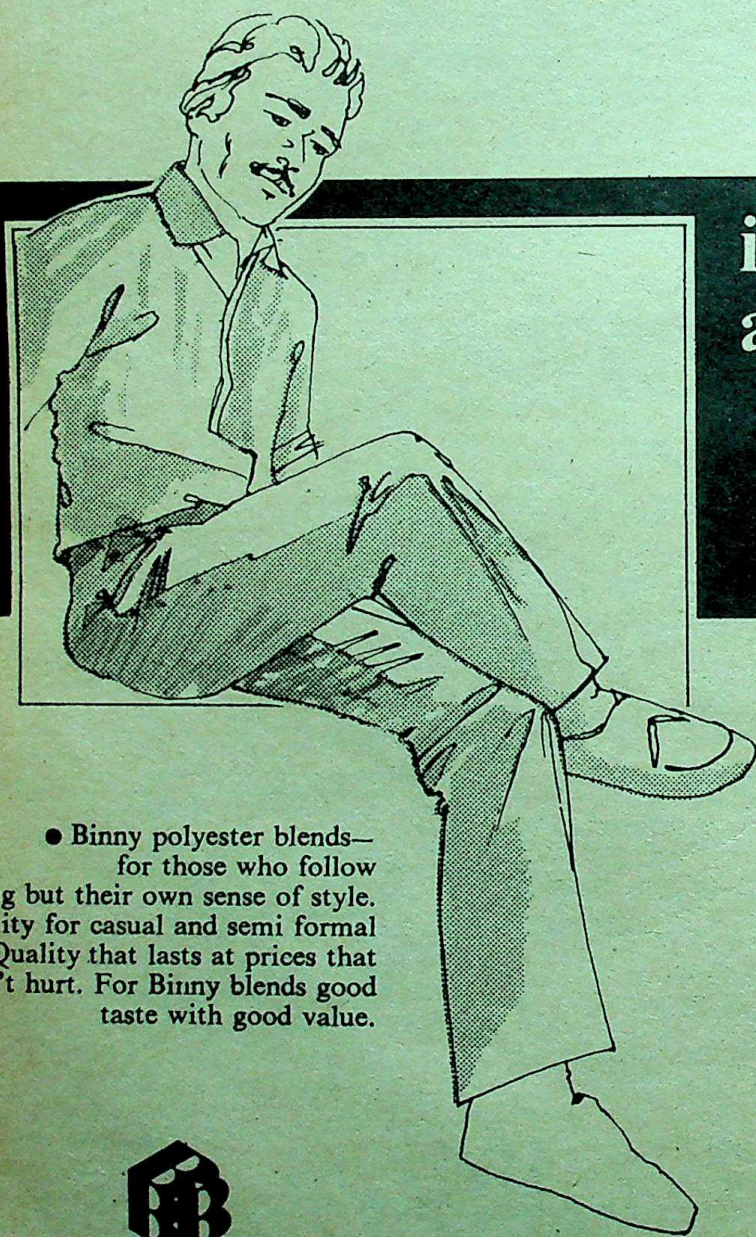
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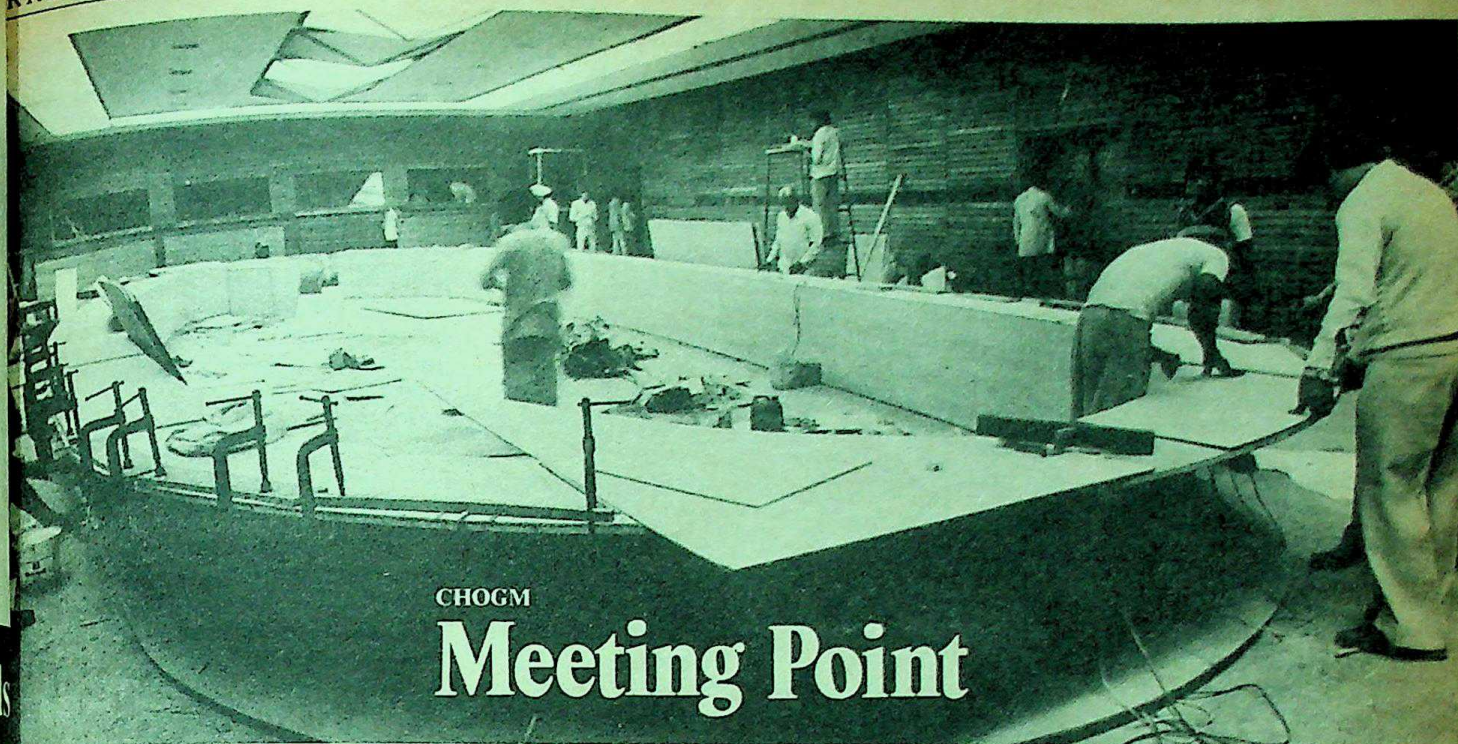


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CHOGM

Meeting Point

The oval table being assembled for the meet: ensuring equality

FOR A capital which has taken in its stride droves of presidents, premiers and princes gathering for the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and thousands of athletes for the colourful of the Ninth Asiad, New Delhi is understandably blasé at the prospect of yet another mass gathering of world leaders. For there is none of the sprucing up that accompanied the games last year, nor any of high tension security which intruded into the life of the capital during NAM last March. Another, the next summit has to do with the Commonwealth, and that for most people about as electrifying a prospect as the meeting of a public school old boys. After all, isn't the Commonwealth just so many international talking shops, isn't it rooted in an imperial history of which most people have no more than a hazy notion?

Yet, as the countdown comes to a close of the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) later this month, a get together with an invitation of some 44 heads of state and government to mention Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in a parallel visit to India, there is a tingling sense that this could be a meeting with a difference. The reason is clear: CHOGM, like the place as the temperature of the world economy steadily drops, it occurs when the most important, in the shadow of the invasion of Grenada, an issue which has taken the Commonwealth down the middle

page 128).
Discussing the meet, said the London-

based Commonwealth Secretary-General, S.S. Ramphal: "This is not going to be a conference about Afghanistan or Kampuchea or the Middle East. It will be a conference about where the hell are we going. We are at a low point, at a point of breakdown of the international order, with a sense of danger, and is there something that the Commonwealth can do in terms of practical steps?"

Pressure: As in the past, participants may find that the answer to that rhetorical question is: very little. For unlike the UN's Security Council, for example, which is empowered to take decisions, the Commonwealth can do little more than talk things over. Yet there will be more pressure for a communique consisting of more than platitudes because of the nature of the problems that face the Commonwealth countries and the events that have led up to them. By tradition, CHOGM does not discuss bilateral issues but only global problems. So its agenda is likely to be dominated by subjects such as:

► Grenada, where the US invasion has put the otherwise homogeneous Commonwealth nations on opposing sides of the fence. Represented at the New Delhi summit—and during the retreat at Goa—will be non-aligned nations, US allies and Caribbean states most intimately affected by the US action. As CHOGM Chief Coordinator Natwar Singh says: "Grenada is a real test for the Commonwealth and our hope is that it won't be disruptive to the exclusion of all else."

► The global economic scene in which

some Commonwealth countries like Bangladesh, Jamaica and Sri Lanka have taken a hard knock and others, including Britain, are now beginning to ask the US to moderate its policies, particularly its fiscal deficits and interest rates, which have created problems even for its wealthy allies.

► A reform of the international monetary system. Not for the first time, the Commonwealth secretariat has taken the initiative to find a compromise between the contending views of the economic North and South. A document authored by western and Third World economists will be on the table at New Delhi, setting out, as Ramphal says, the "middle ground."

► Global tensions. With 28 of the Commonwealth's 47 members also party to the NAM declarations, there will be considerable pressure on host India, which chairs NAM for the next three years, to pull CHOGM's deliberations in the direction of NAM's exhortations to the global community. Such moves will obviously be resisted by the US's allies present at the conference.

No Agenda: Obviously, there will be few firm public statements on subjects as contentious as these. More important, beyond the communique it won't even be possible to assess exactly what measure of agreement or disagreement was evident at the week-long conference. One of the points on which CHOGM scores in comparison with other summits is that it has no plenary session, no public statements and the participants aren't obliged to play to any gallery. As Singh says: "There is no agenda, no prepared speeches, only closed door meetings and there is real

discussion. Everyone speaks English, and since there are no interpreters the nuances aren't lost."

The other advantage of CHOGM is that it brings together heads of state who cut across the traditional rich-poor divide. Contentious issues can therefore be discussed especially at the retreat which has become an integral part of CHOGM since 1973 when the meeting was held in Ottawa. Says Secretary-General Ramphal: "Goa is really very important. Though it is cast in terms of a retreat, it is the time that they do their most significant work. If we are to find a point of convergence, it will be at Goa."

For all that, CHOGM's bottom line is unlikely to be very different from that of other international organisations grappling with intractable global problems. True, Britain's Premier Margaret Thatcher, who will host the next summit of the rich countries in London next summer and is probably the one leader whose word is heard in Washington, will come away from New Delhi with a better understanding of the Third World viewpoint. True, too, the CHOGM system of closed door discussion has evoked interest in other forums such as the European Economic Community. But the bonds that have kept the Commonwealth together aren't what they once were. The old hallmarks of the Commonwealth—Westminster parliamentary democracy, British style legal systems, armed forces and civil services and, most important, a broadly identifiable approach to certain kinds of international problems—have faded. In some instances the inherited institutions have been adapted to modern needs, in most others they've been abandoned. And the outlook and policies of member governments are now dictated less by historical past as contemporary necessity and experience.

There are probably as many Marxist regimes in the Commonwealth as there are royalist or republican, and the portents are far greater rather than less diversity. As long as this doesn't pull the grouping apart, there will be more than merely fraternal purpose in CHOGM gatherings.

New Delhi is expected to be smooth sailing not least because of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's awareness of her new-found global role. As Jawaharlal Nehru University's M.S. Rajan says, it is a coincidental tribute to the memory of India's first prime minister that the two groupings he was most closely identified with, the non-aligned and the Commonwealth, both held their summits in India within months of each other. Mrs Gandhi has worked overtime for the past year to make sure that glitter doesn't tarnish.

—SUMAN DUBEY

MADHYA PRADESH

Justices Delayed



JUST two months before his retirement, publicity-shy Guru Prasanna Singh, chief justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, is uncomfortably at the centre of media attention. This follows a controversial speech he addressed late last month to secretaries and presidents of the state's bar associations in Jabalpur. In it, Singh had made a pointed reference to the shortage of judges in the high court, and to the indifference of officials in cases in which the Government is a party. What focussed the glare of public notice and speculation on Singh was the fact that his speech highlighted the serious differences between the chief justice and the party bosses.

Although Madhya Pradesh is not the only state with a shortage of judges—out of



Singh: head-on collision

a sanctioned 29 seats, only 19 judges have been appointed—it is certainly one of the most severely affected. The Allahabad High Court holds the dubious distinction of having the largest number of vacancies—16—but as its sanctioned strength at 60 is much greater, it is considerably better off. Consequently, there are nearly 28,000 cases already pending there this year, of which 5,000 have been pending for more than five years, according to a statement of Chief Minister Arjun Singh. Ironically enough, it is the Government—the largest litigant—which is suffering the most as a result of the delay in filling the vacancies.

Political Choice: The Government and Singh have indulged in a sort of tug-of-war over new appointments. Procedure requires that the chief justice present a list of candidates to be appointed to a bench, which after scrutiny passes it on to the chief minister, who in turn either approves some or all those in the list, or suggests some other names. This list goes to the governor, who first considers the common names, and then the

others—passing the list to the Union Ministry, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, and ultimately the prime minister who has the final say in the matter.

Singh himself has, according to a placed source in Delhi, initiated the new appointments at least thrice, suggesting in all about 20 names. The first two Chief Minister Arjun Singh is said to have endorsed the lists almost fully, only to be spiked by an intractable Centre. Since the state Government has been trying to identify candidates acceptable both to the party high command and Singh—an easy job. But the Centre's attitude has certainly provoked speculation as to its motives in holding out—the major accusation being that the ruling party wants to pack the judiciary with its own people. Says Sardar Jendra Singh, 70, former Congress(I) president of the Madhya Pradesh Bar Association: "Greater emphasis is being placed on the candidates' political thinking than, say, 15 years ago. The ruling party wants to be certain that judges are not bound to the party's philosophy."

Canny Strategy: Not many are taking the Government's blatantly cynical strategy so calmly. Says Y.S. Dharmadhikari, an eminent lawyer: "If they are serious people 'committed' to a particular party, it is an attempt to retain power through the judiciary. Amenable judges in the long run lead to a loss of faith in the judiciary. Chief justice's choice is based on merit, not political considerations. It should be accepted." Adds 40-year-old Prakash Chandra Naik, secretary of the state bar association: "It is dangerous. We might end up with politicians as judges and judges as politicians."

For the chief justice, the war has been a frustrating one. When he took over in mid-1978, the number of major cases pending then was 33,700—by the end of 1980 it was down to 25,786, a substantial improvement. During that period, the number of high court judges rose from 20 to 25, but fell down again to 23 in 1980. Later, the strength fell to 21 judges, then a dismal 17, before settling at 19 this year. Singh estimates that at least 21 judges are needed to clear the 17,000 cases that are instituted each year. And he has already in public expressed himself very firmly in this regard less than a year before his speech in Jabalpur.

But the Government, in its turn, has been lying low. Observers say it is waiting for Singh to retire, and hoping that the next chief justice will be closer in his thinking to the ruling party. Meanwhile, with the tug-of-war having reached a tense stalemate, cases continue to accumulate in the high court, with a massive 30,000 expected to pile up by the end of this year.

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Shaka
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Chandra Gupta
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Samudragupta
(335 – 375 AD)



Kumar Gupta
(415 – 455 AD)



Kumar Gupta
(415 – 455 AD)



Kumar Gupta
(415 – 455 AD)



Gujarat Sultanate
(1536 – 1553 AD)



Shah Alam I
(1707 – 1712 AD)



Mughal Mohammed
(1719 – 1748 AD)

e



Samudragupta
(335 - 375 AD)



Chandra Gupta II
(375 - 414 AD)



Chandra Gupta II
(375 - 414 AD)



Later Gupta
(455 - 510 AD)



Later Gupta
(455 - 510 AD)



Delhi Sultanate
(1206 - 1351 AD)



Nawab of Awadh
(1819 - 1827 AD)



Nawab of Awadh
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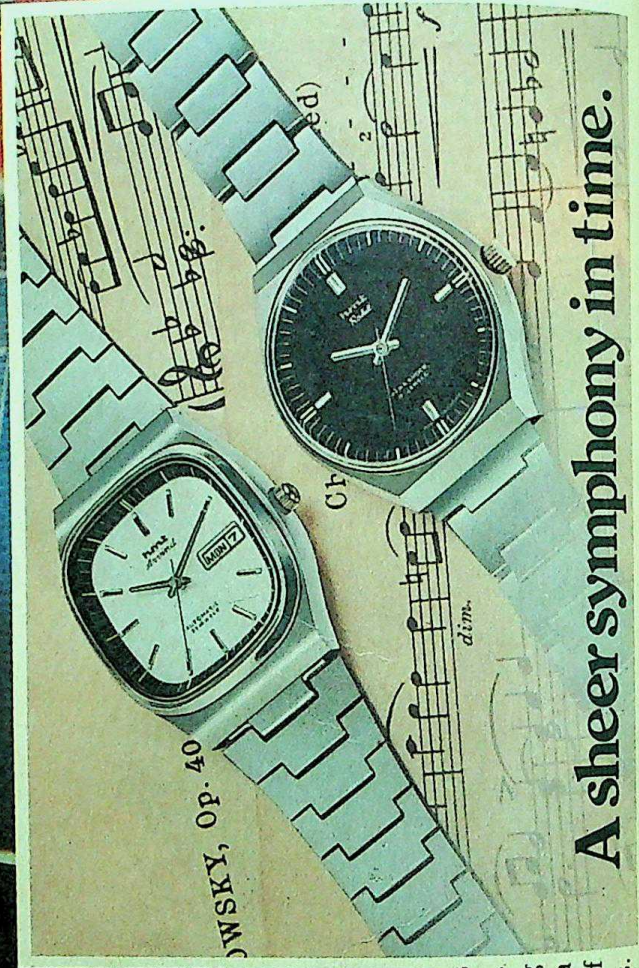


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Surprise Verdict

FROM the day it first cropped up in court the death of Sudha Goel has been front-page news. In May Additional Sessions Judge S.M. Aggarwal made legal history of sorts when he imposed death penalty on Sudha's husband Laxman Kumar, his mother Shakuntala Devi and brother Subhash. The judge affirmed the death penalty observing that the case was made worse by the fact that Sudha was pregnant at the time.

Last fortnight the case was back in the court once again. In a startling verdict the Delhi High Court struck down S.M. Aggarwal's judgement and declared Shakuntala Devi and her two sons innocent. In a trenchant passage the two high court judges, Justice R.N. Aggarwal and Justice Malik Sharief-Ud-Din, observed that in his attempt to find a motive for the crime, "the learned additional sessions judge has given flight to his imagination and fancies".

Stern Criticism: As the verdict gathered strength Justice R.N. Aggarwal who wrote the high court judgement remarked in court one day that "people should think before they criticise it". Some ways his plaintive complaint was justified. Few of his vocal critics knew more than the barest details of the judgement. They had latched on to a passage at the tail end of the judgement where the judge remarked almost apologetically that "judges are human beings and can err. The satisfying part is that we are not the final court and there is a court above us and if our judgement is wrong it shall be set right."

But while much of the early criticism of the judgement may well have been unfounded, a comparison of the two judgements is as a telling and rather uncomfortable illustration of how different judges can start with the same set of facts and come to entirely opposite conclusions. The undisputed facts of the case are that around 9 p.m. on December 1, 1980 the neighbours heard screams. They ran to the house they found it in flames. She died the next morning.

S.M. Aggarwal placed great value on the evidence of the neighbours who said that Laxman and Subhash were holding the door to prevent them from entering the

courtyard where Sudha was burning to death. The neighbours also testified that Sudha had repeatedly screamed that Shakuntala Devi had doused her with kerosene and with the help of her two sons set her ablaze. The sessions judge had even gone to the extent of remarking: "The testimony of Jaspal Singh is of sterling worth and deserves implicit reliance." He added that the witness had, "stood the test of cross examination in a very courageous manner."

The high court felt differently. The two judges were sceptical about the evidence of the neighbours. They pointed out that the



Shakuntala Devi flanked by Laxman Kumar and Subhash: relieved

statements made by the witnesses to the police and to the sessions court had varied. They also place emphasis on the fact that the neighbours had not gone to the police immediately but had held a meeting the next day, and only then gone to the police station.

Different Approach: For their part the high court judges placed their faith in the written declaration made by Sudha in the hospital, which was taken down by Sub-Inspector Surinder Dev and witnessed by a senior doctor R. Joseph at St. Stephen's Hospital. It also places weight on the fact that Sudha's sister was with her much of the time in hospital and that she had allowed Sudha's husband and his brother to accompany them to hospital. The sessions judge disbelieved the sub-inspector and the doctor and passed strictures against both.

The two judgements are speckled with a host of other minor differences. Examples:

► S.M. Aggarwal of the sessions court declined to accept letters written by Sudha's family as proof of cordial relations between the two families. He said that the girl's family had probably thought it prudent to flatter her husband's family for Sudha's sake. The high court dismisses such theories and

accepts the letters at their face value;

► The high court explains the fact that there was 17 litres of kerosene in the house saying that this is not unusual in these days when gas is occasionally in short supply. It also does not appear to find anything odd in the fact that Sudha was lighting the stove in the courtyard on a winter night when there was gas in the house. The session judge believes this to be telling evidence;

► The high court accepted the evidence of Jaswant Singh, the taxi-driver, who took Sudha to hospital. It even remarks that though the prosecution did not examine the taxi-driver the "accused took the risk to examine the driver of the taxi in which admittedly the deceased was taken to hospital". The sessions court did not accept the taxi driver's evidence.

Whatever may be the merits of the two judgements, they are a depressing illustration of how difficult it is to get convictions in dowry death cases, where the courts have to sift through a jumble of conflicting circumstantial evidence. Many lawyers stress that it is impossible to get convictions if the judges take an overly technical approach in such cases. Says lawyer Kirti Singh: "The judges must be aware of social realities." Adds Rani Jethmalani, who intervened in the case on behalf of a women's organisation, the Mahila Dakshata Samiti:

"The judges cannot live in their ivory towers. The court must bear in mind that there are such things as dowry deaths and police corruption."

The case has already created more than its fair share of storms in the legal fraternity. S.M. Aggarwal was hauled up some time ago for making a speech on the case. Delhi lawyers are also upset over the demonstrations by the various women's organisations. The Delhi Bar Association has passed a resolution deploring demonstrations in the high court premises. Other lawyers are angry that the judges should have acknowledged public opinion at the end of the judgement. Says Raju Ramchandran, a young Supreme Court lawyer: "The judges should not have made such remarks."

Meanwhile as the controversy swirls, Shakuntala Devi and her two sons have returned to a home after a five-month stay on death row. But they may yet face more legal action. The state is examining the question of whether it should appeal to the Supreme Court. Even if it does not, various women's rights activists have vowed to go in appeal. With all these moves afoot it looks as if the ghost of Sudha Goel may not have been laid to rest yet.

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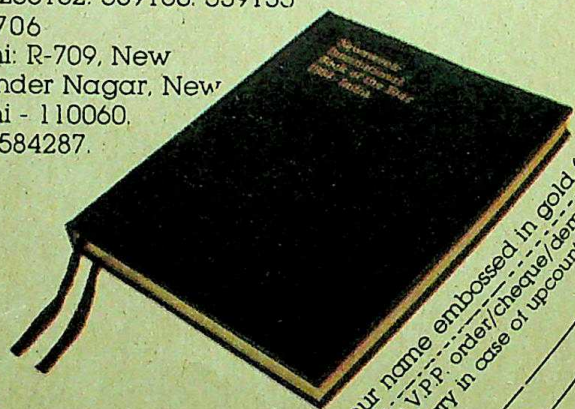
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Congress(J).

Growing Rift: Yet another grouse the Congress(J) has is that when one of their members, Sam Oommen, died of viral fever, the Government went ahead with the firing-in ceremony of Deputy Chief Minister Avukaderkutty Naha—a rather unorthodox move. Said an angry Congress(J) member: "At least as a mark of respect to our MLA, they could have postponed the firing-in ceremony by a day." And on top of that, partymen believe the Congress(I) has been trying to make mischief in the Congress(J) by playing one member against another. Said a disgusted P.C. George, Congress(J) party secretary and MLA: "All this has made us sick of the functioning of Government, and one of the big questions before us is whether we should continue in the front led by the Congress(I) at all. Adding to the general bad blood all round, Eapen Varghese, chairman of the Congress(J), has been saying quite openly apart from the departments managed by two partymen in the Government all the other departments were corrupt. The Congress(I), in its turn, seems to be responsible for some of the problems it is faced with. It was allegedly a group of



P.J. Joseph: tricky problems

student supporters of the Congress(I) that attacked the A.K. Gopalan Centre, party headquarters of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) in downtown Trivandrum with country-made bombs, while that party's state secretariat was in session. This was, predictably enough, followed by a series of violent clashes between the two parties concerned, all over the state.

Troubled Water: Surrounded, practically on all sides, the Karunakaran Ministry faces yet another threat. Baby John, the

veteran Revolutionary Socialist Party chief and Opposition leader, who has over the years shown a penchant for fishing in troubled waters—he himself is a top seafood exporter—announced confidently that he would see the Karunakaran Ministry toppled by the end of November. His party is planning to move a no-trust motion soon.

And the growing disaffection between the Congress(I) and Congress(J) might easily push the latter into an awkward embrace with the Marxists—the two parties have already had talks. For the Congress(J), it would be an embarrassing partnership, if it came about. Commented a political observer: "How can a party like the Congress(J), which is supported by the Catholic church afford to be in the Marxist camp, especially with the Pope scheduled to visit India early next year?"

But the ever-smiling Karunakaran himself seems pretty unfazed by all these ominous designs on his gaddi. Says he, rather philosophically, and cheerfully: "I do not think any political astrologer has made any correct prediction. Man is not sure about himself and his fate, similarly, nobody can predict the fate of my ministry."

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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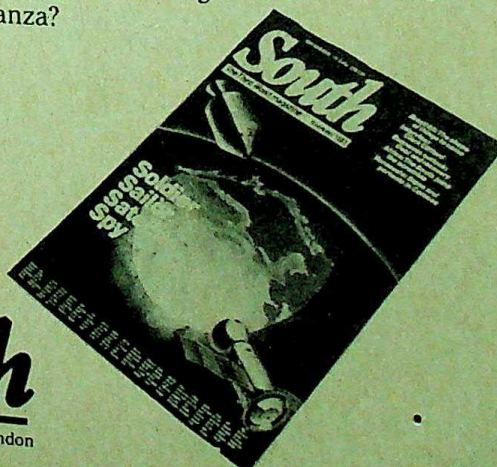
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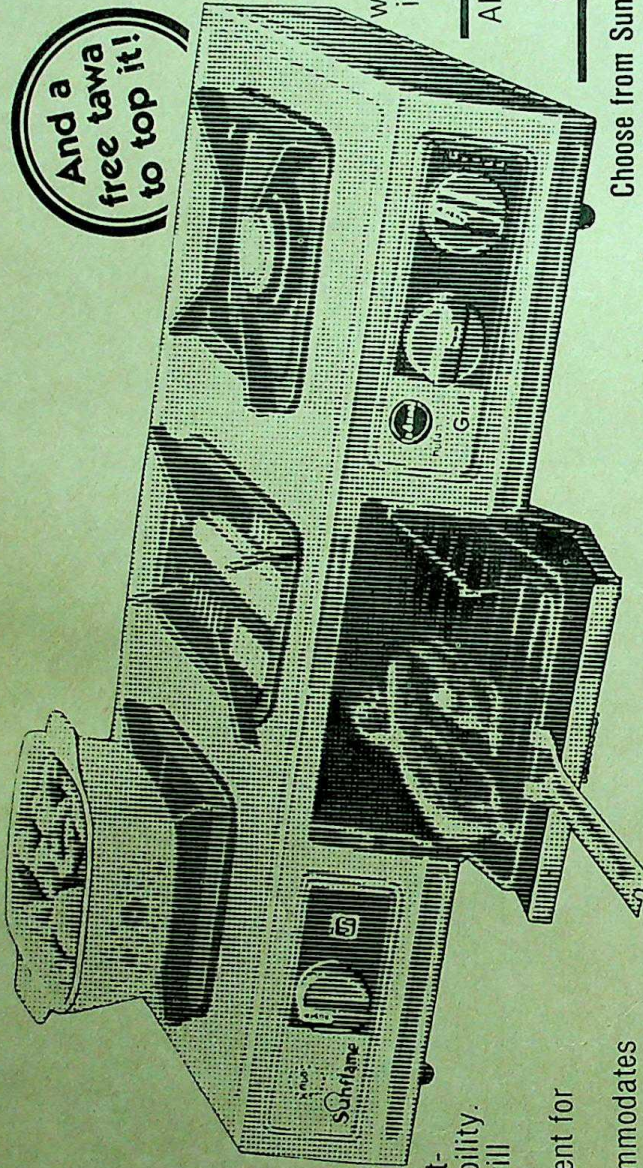
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Tea And Treachery

LAST year, Maharashtra Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil's sixty-sixth birthday, on November 13, was noteworthy because it was the occasion for a gathering of pro-Patil MP's and MLA's at

Sangli where the first salvo in the campaign to get rid of former chief minister Babasaheb Bhosale was fired. Now even before Patil's sixty-seventh birthday this week, his party colleagues' move to dethrone him has gained momentum.

With a touch of poetic justice, Bhosale

at his flat in Bombay hosted a party for six state party leaders while the chief minister was in Delhi. The party signified

the revolt by the loyalists against Patil has gained increasing respectability, as some of the guests such as former chief minister A.R. Antulay and K.K. Tirpude, had earlier avoided open dissidence. Another guest, MPCC(I) President M. Kamble, was ironically reputed as Patil's nominee when he was appointed two months ago in place of S.M.I. Aseer. Deputy Chief Minister Ramrao Adik was also present along with N.M. Tidke from Vidarbha and Baburao Kale from Marathwada.

Patil returned from Delhi with the remark that while the tea party "does not surprise me", he was concentrating his ener-

gies on the two by-elections in the state from Sangli and Patan in western Maharashtra. His followers, however, spread the word that they would be fighting back and that Patil would demand a vote of confidence before the forthcoming Nagpur Assembly session. Faced with his chief minister's wrath, Kamble and some of the plotters reacted like children caught with their hands in the cookie jar. Kamble insisted that the party had no political significance and Tirpude remarked diplomatically: "We discussed this and that." In fact the tea party was followed by separate conclaves between Antulay, Bhosale and Adik and Antulay, Bhosale and Tirpude.

Open Rivalry: In private, Adik has been boldened to hit out at Patil, since not only the chief minister cut his deputy down to size but he has of late also been snubbed by the high command in Delhi. Adik as industry

minister is still sitting on the file with the chief minister's recommendations for members to the state's advisory board for industries and one of the chief minister's nominees is Manohar Phalke, a brother of Patil's wife Shalinitai. What is more, when Patil phoned up to ask for Adik's suggestions for names to the State Transport Corporation, Adik snapped that since the chief minister had in the past happily been reconstituting the various corporations without consulting him he failed to see why he should suddenly take him into confidence.

Adik was one of the initiators of the tea



party, where the guests made it plain that if the choice was between Patil and Adik they would rather opt for Adik since they were distrustful of Dada's loyalties which they felt lay with other Maratha leaders such as Y.B. Chavan and Congress(S) President Sharad Pawar. The breaking of the Patil-Chavan-Pawar axis was also reportedly discussed at the tea party.

The invitees, some of whom had not been on speaking terms with others for long, were persuaded to bury the hatchet and attend with the line that Antulay, breaking his recent stance of non-involvement would present. Several repented by remarking: "If Antulay comes then I too will come." The normally reticent Kamble decided to throw in his lot with the dissidents after his humiliation at the AIACC(I) meeting in Bombay where he was kept in the background.

While host Bhosale claimed his motive

for the party, ostensibly to felicitate Kamble on taking over as MPCC(I) president, was that "I wanted everyone to be friends so as to keep Maharashtra safe and strong for Indiraji and Rajivji", his supporter. MLA S.N. Desai was more specific. Said Desai: "I welcome this meeting where leaders representing 190 out of 236 Congress(I) MLA's and MLC's in the state have got together and decided to fight the systematic attempt, since Patil assumed office, to strangle the loyalists".

Contrasting Campaigns: Among the loyalists, suspicions against Patil have been strengthened by the Patil family's behaviour at Sangli and Patan. In Patan, Patil and Chavan had supported the candidature of Vikramsinh Patankar but the high command opted instead for Shivajirao Desai, the son of

Balasaheb Desai, the MLA from the area for decades whose death necessitated the by-election. Patankar is standing as an Independent and not only have the opposition parties decided to support Patankar but loyalists allege that supporters of Chavan and Patil have been actively backing and financing rebel Congressmen. The seat is no longer completely safe for the ruling party. Patil has campaigned in Patan but his efforts seem half-hearted; for example, his helicopter landed last fortnight 12 miles away from his scheduled meeting spot at Tade, so that he could not address the main gathering.

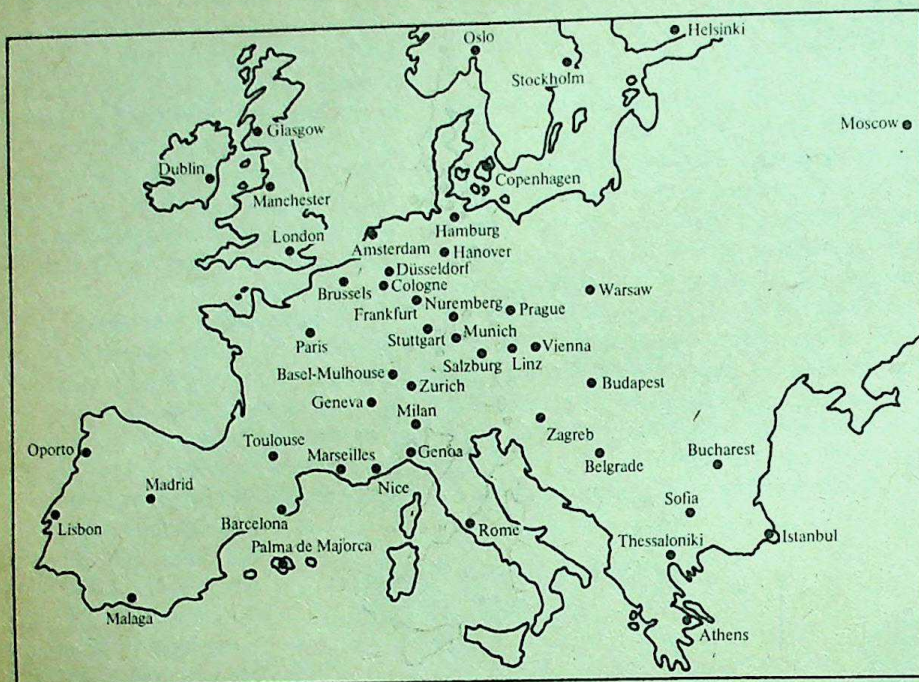
In contrast, in the nearby Sangli parliamentary constituency Patil is campaigning full time for wife Shalinitai. He said that if his wife was defeated

he would resign from the chief ministership. Since polling day is his birthday he said that the best gift he could receive was a vote for Shalinitai. This seems a message for his own family, notably his son Prakash, who wanted the ticket, and his nephew Vishnu Patil.

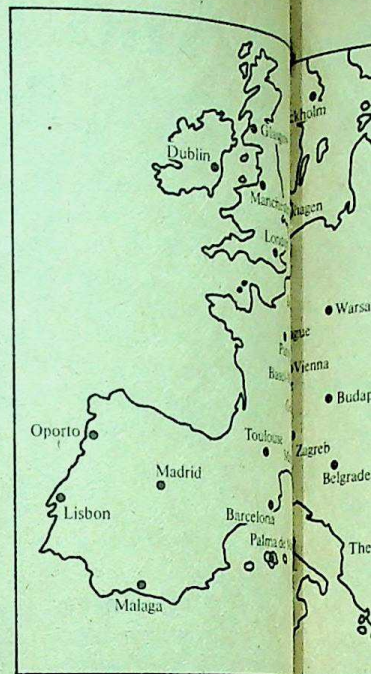
But to add grist to the rumour mill that the chief minister is not as loyal to his prime minister as he should be, loyalists note that the first batch of election posters from Sangli had no photograph of Mrs Gandhi at all and the second batch carried large photos of the Patils and only a tiny one of the prime minister. Opposing Shalinitai in Sangli is Vishwasrao Patil, Janata chief from the district who has the support of a combined opposition but has an uphill task all the same. And judging by the way the Patil bandwagon is rolling along, he will be some distance from the summit when Shalinitai reaches the top.

—COOMI KAPOOR

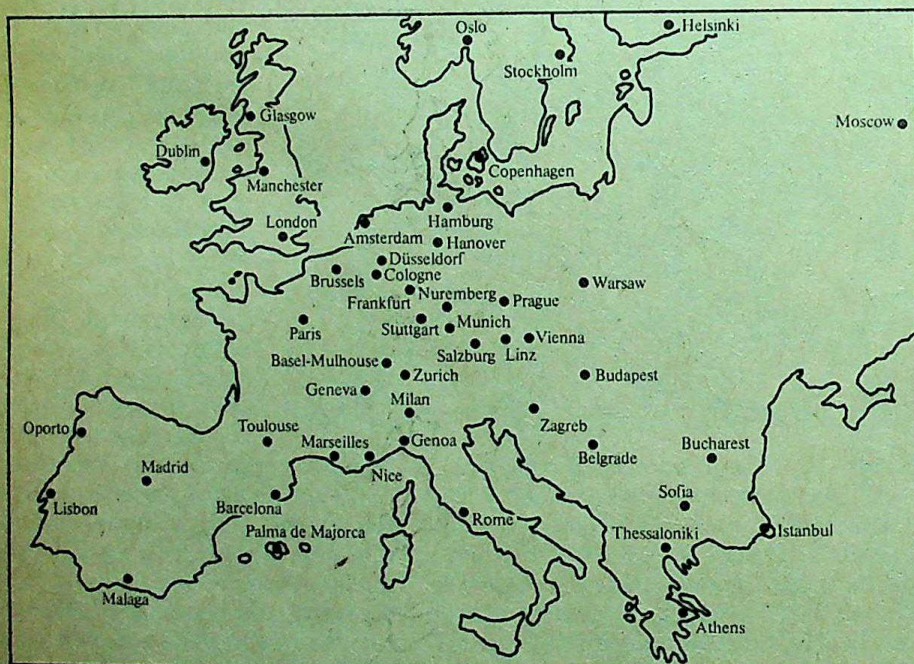
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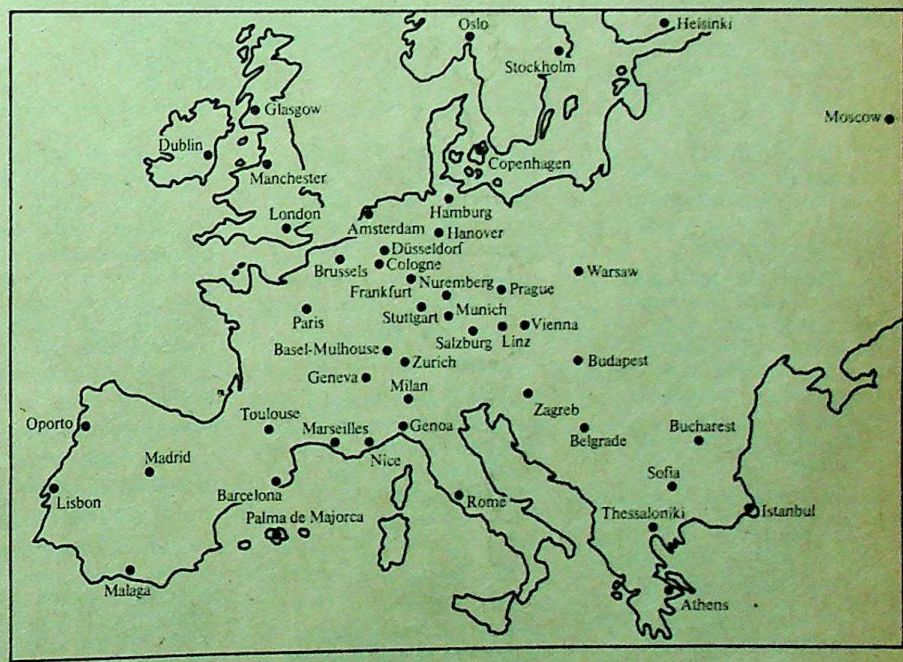
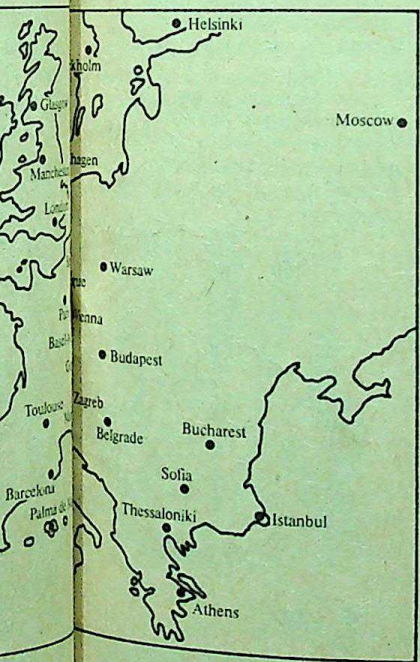
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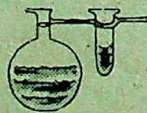
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ORISSA

Togetherhness

ORISSA's Chief Minister, Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, has reason to be pleased with himself. The dissidents within the Congress(I), who had been a constant bugbear during the past 40 months—

repeatedly taking to the high command charges of corruption and nepotism—surrendered arms last fortnight.

The sudden change in the dissidents' tune was orchestrated from New Delhi. Early in the month, Patnaik's arch rival, Manu Charan Lenka, called on Mrs Gandhi to seek her "blessings and advice". He said: "We did our best to get the corruption-ridden government removed in the interest of the party and the state, and it is now for Mrs Gandhi to take a decision."

But the decision, after the AICC(I) meet in Bombay last month, is all for cohesion—effectively ready the ranks for the electoral battle. As the state party chief, Nityanand Mishra, said: "This is an in-house exercise to bring everybody together." He pointed out that "after two months we would be facing panchayat elections followed by municipal elections, and then we will be preparing for parliamentary elections".

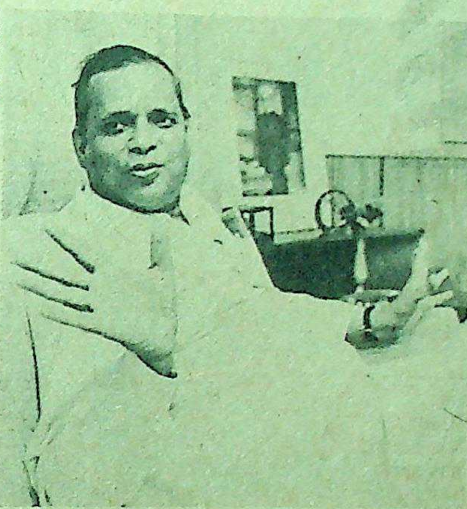
Overtures: Patnaik and Mishra met leaders of various factions during their recent visit to Delhi in a bid to effect a compromise. But their direct efforts at reconciliation were unsuccessful as the two most powerful leaders from the state at the Centre, Union ministers Ram Chandra Rath and P. Singhdeo, did not respond. It was then that the high command entered the act and, summoning dissident leaders to the capital, worked out a new formula called 'assimilation'.

According to senior party members, the 'assimilation' is also aimed at preparing the ground for the return of veterans of the Congress who have over the years left the fold. Indeed, one reason the moves against dissident leaders have been so successful—that—having found Rath and Singhdeo willing to lead them openly—they are now waiting for the re-entry of Nandini Pathy, which is expected before the next session of the AICC(I) in December. Patnaik himself denied that there had been any dissident activity against him. He claims: "Every time I meet Ram Chandra Rath and others who are called dissidents, I ask them for their help. Had there been dissident activity or what my critics used to say about my government been true, I would not have been able to survive and work for the people."

Strong Allegations: But, though the chief minister may feel his survival is due to his work for the people, his critics have a different story to tell. According to them, Patnaik has engaged in a steady campaign of attrition against the dissidents. The leaders, Lenka, Mehtab Ali, Bipin Das, Hemanand Biswal (who as Public Undertakings Committee chairman had exposed the mustard oil deal scandal) and others have been systematically isolated. They claim that in the organisational elections last July, they were sidelined and their constituencies deprived of many development programmes.

Lenka, a leader of the Orissa Textile Mills Workers Union, found himself out in the cold after the Government took it over. There are allegations that workers loyal to him were sacked on the plea of overstaffing.

BHAWAN SINGH



Patnaik: triumphant

Officials, however, dismiss these charges as a "cock-and-bull story". Said a Patnaik supporter: "Those who have done little for the people in the area and have been alienated from the people were floating such imaginative stories."

Transfer Issue: The dissidents claim that the recent spate of transfers and other changes in their constituencies were aimed at intimidating them. Patnaik defends these executive actions on the ground that he was trying to ensure better implementation of development programmes. He disclosed that he had asked his ministers to make a block level survey. The researchers estimated that implementation was 60 per cent and 30 per cent of the funds were misappropriated.

But now that 'assimilation' is well under way, party members say that Cabinet expansion cannot be far behind. So far, the high command has stalled expansion fearing that it would lead to more bad blood. But now that the tables have been cleared, Patnaik will have to tread carefully if he is to consolidate his present triumph into victory.

—FARZAND AHMED in Bhubaneswar

WEST BENGAL

Courting Couple

THE SIGNS are clear. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is again set on a course of wooing the left, particularly the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), which by virtue of being

in office in two states and with 36 members in the Lok Sabha is obviously the most relevant leftist force in the country today. She is relying once more on the strategy she used in 1969 when leftist support helped put V.V. Giri in the Rashtrapati Bhavan and subsequently led to the consolidation of her power and the splitting of the Congress party. Then, 10 years later, in 1979, she had the satisfaction of seeing the CPI(M) decide to withhold support from the Morarji Desai ministry—a crucial move that led to its fall and Mrs Gandhi's dramatic re-entry. Now, with the Opposition trying desperately to unite once again, the prime minister seems to be set on taking the wind out of its sails by isolating its potential allies, the Marxists.

There is a touch of desperation to her efforts, though. On her own she sought a meeting with CPI(M) General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad, where she surprised him by trying to convince him that even though she was the Congress president in 1959, she "personally" had nothing to do with the toppling of his ministry in Kerala. The communists had always blamed her for that disaster, but in the past 24 years, she had never bothered to make them think otherwise.

Discernible Pattern: As the Marxists wondered at the reasons behind the new sense of friendliness, they discerned a definite pattern. They recalled that the session of the All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I) in Bombay, had carefully refrained from attacking the CPI(M) although no other opposition party was spared. As a matter of fact, Congress(I) delegates from West Bengal had actually expressed their resentment at the preferential treatment meted out to their arch enemies by their own party leaders.

The new sympathy for the leftists went even further. When West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu and Finance Minister Ashok Mitra went to Delhi last fortnight to attend the conference on the abolition of sales tax, they thought their pleas for non-abolition would fall on deaf ears. The Centre was expected to replace sales tax with additional excise duty, revenue from which would not accrue to the state. Their pessimism was heightened by the fact that Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee

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and said earlier: "A minority (the non-congress-I states) cannot dictate over a majority." Yet, at the conference, the leftist ministers found Mukherjee very receptive. Recalls Mitra: "A draft was prepared which said the issue would be referred to a committee of chief ministers. Then Pranab Mukherjee left the conference for a few minutes, and when he returned, it was found that he had a new draft in which the issue was totally dropped." According to informed sources, this was done after last-minute consultations with Rajiv Gandhi.

Mustering Support: Marxist leaders point out that for quite some time now, Mrs Gandhi has publicly said she regrets that leftist forces like the CPI(M) should attach themselves to the Opposition with whom they have nothing in common, in terms of ideology. The inference is that they would be more at home with her programmes. She makes this up even at private meetings with Basu. The Marxist interpretation of these overtures is that Mrs Gandhi is once again feeling isolated by the growing dissension in various states, and the moves by the Opposition to come together. But why would she oppose the Marxists as her allies, as they do not really account for much on the national level? Mitra's explanation is: "With us on her side, Mrs Gandhi would get the leftist image she seems to enjoy so much."

What makes the CPI(M) vulnerable to such overtures is the fact that on issues like Afghanistan, the agitation in Assam and the issue of separatism as a whole, the Marxists are closer to the ruling party than to constituents of the United Front (UF) like the Janata. Jyoti Basu himself admits this. Says "One reason why no critical reference was made about us at the Bombay AICC(I) session was that top leaders in the party felt they needed our help to fight the forces of communalism and separatism. And we want to help the prime minister fight these forces as we do not want the country to disintegrate."

Doubtful Position: Apart from the common causes with the Congress(I), the Marxists claim to be in no way sympathetic to Mrs Gandhi herself. Says Mitra emphatically: "She is the principal enemy and will have to be fought to the bitter end." Others say the party are not sure how immune it is to Mrs Gandhi's wooing. They point out that even after branding her a dictator during the emergency, a majority in the party central committee actually took a decision which helped bring her back. They are particularly worried at what two of the party leaders now in Delhi, might do.

The two are party ideologue M. Jayapunniah who had masterminded the ominous withdrawal of support from the Janata ministry in 1979, only to apologise for

it at party conclaves later, and trade unionist P. Ramamurthy, who is lying low at the moment. Not even Jyoti Basu was spared by party hardliners when he recently agreed to a suggestion by the state Congress(I) that they issue a joint appeal to their cadres to stop fights in the state. Pulled up for this gaffe by CPI(M) Secretary Saroj Mukherjee, Basu ingeniously explained: "It was a tactical move on my part as I had known that the Congress(I) would back out at the last moment."

But Basu is clearly aware of the possibility that Mrs Gandhi might be trying to repeat her earlier successful strategy: "Her real intentions are not very clear, and only she knows what she is up to." When specifically asked whether Mrs Gandhi might be attempting to repeat her 1969 feat, when her closest allies were the leftists, Basu thinks a moment before saying, with one of his rare smiles: "History does not repeat itself always." But as Basu's inspiration, Karl Marx, himself said, "History repeats itself twice, the first time as a tragedy, and then as a farce."

—SUMANTA SEN

GUJARAT

Dull Party



THE RASHTRIYA Congress (RC), a breakaway group of the Gujarat Congress(I), seemed to have missed the bus. Since its inception a year ago, it had failed to interest too many people. Its high-flown promises and clichéd resolutions, and even the massive media build-up at the start, had not helped it rise to the status of even a regional party.

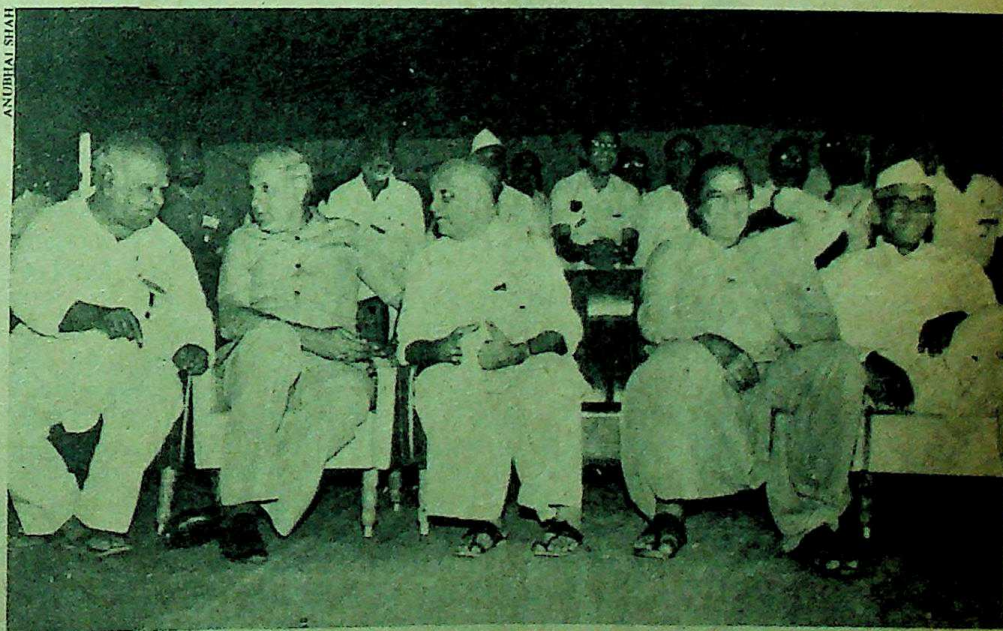
But last fortnight, the RC made a clever

move—by organising a convention of various parties in Bhuj, a quiet, sleepy town of Kutch district. The convention pulled in national leaders of such tremendous curiosity value as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. In the process, the Rashtriya Congress managed some badly-needed political mileage for itself.

The convention itself was a rather humdrum affair. Instead of stressing the advantages of a unified opposition, leaders at the meet kept getting carried away by their own heroism and the villainy of the Congress(I). Indeed so disunited were the opposition groups that NTR and Farooq categorically told newsmen that they were not planning to join the United Front, only help it along the way.

Boring Meet: Predictably, rhetoric and resolutions were passed. The drafts for the 12 rather inane resolutions were prepared by the RC leaders a few hours before the convention was scheduled to begin. While they pondered on the political and socio-economic situations in the country, the resolutions lacked depth and were worded just to run down the ruling party. Said an onlooker: "They seem to be designed to kill time as the convention has to last a full day."

The day dragged on. The leaders of the different parties made long, vague speeches—including a 45-minute talk by H.N. Bahuguna, chief of the Democratic Socialist Party and a plea for an "oust Solanki Government" campaign by Chimanbhai Patel, a Gujarat Janata leader. Attention wandered again and again to NTR, the master showman—draped in saffron, a gold earring dangling from his right ear—trying desperately to stifle a yawn. Even the excitement of a political convention in a one-horse



(From left) Mehta, Farooq, Adani, NTR and Bahuguna: humdrum affair

CURRENT EVENTS

town like Bhuj could barely keep the audience awake.

In fact, Bhuj was chosen as the venue because there was no other place where the RC could pull in a sizeable crowd and get a show organised. Admitted Mahipat Mehta, an MP from Kutch and one of the hosts: "We held it here because nowhere else could we have set up such a show and also fed 5,000 people." Despite that, only about 1,000 people turned up, half from Kutch. Many of them were villagers, interested more in the sumptuous lunch that was being served than in the proceedings.

Image Boost: Nevertheless, the convention, to an extent, did help build Mehta's sagging image. Said Sharad Sachade, Bhuj Congress(I) president: "The image of the RC took a downward plunge a few months ago when it announced that NTR, Farooq and other opposition leaders were coming to Bhuj at their invitation and then did not turn up. The RC which was planning to contest the Bhuj municipality elections independently, lost hope. The conference will now give them a boost."

The Rashtriya Congress did have a splendid chance to emerge as a strong opposition in Gujarat—although it has only half a dozen MLA's—mostly because there is hardly any effective opposition in the state. But it let time slip by. Now, with the United Front label, it may have a chance once again, but this time not without the help of some electoral alliances.

While the convention itself managed only a scanty audience, the public meeting was attended by over 10,000 people, mainly because of NTR and Farooq. As NTR—in his first major political appearance outside Andhra—stepped onto the dais, he electrified a bored audience into attention. This, despite his insistence on speaking to Gujaratis only in Telugu. Wildly he gesticulated and forcefully he spoke, not even stopping to let his secretary translate into Hindi. Said he to a cheering, semi-comprehending audience: "Millions of dreams have been shattered since Independence. Only politicians, vested interests and the rich have benefited."

Then it was Farooq's turn. He portrayed himself not as a regional leader of Jammu & Kashmir but as a national leader of the Muslims. Muslims, he said, were a part of India and the Centre was trying to divide the Hindus and the Muslims. "Jammu & Kashmir will never be a part of Pakistan," he finished with a flourish. And when the convention closed, host Mehta was confident that it had been a success. Said he: "The Congress(I) cannot win in Kutch now." That may be true since the Rashtriya Congress has become better known after the convention. But only slightly.

—RAMESH MENON

CERC

Legal Aid

FOR A voluntary body dedicated to protecting consumer rights, the Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC) has remarkable staying power. Again and again it has filed court cases against the Madhavsinh Solanki Government in Gujarat that the ministry has not found amusing, including a writ petition challenging the government action of winding up the Macchu Dam Enquiry Commission which was enquiring into the Morvi dam disaster. Then, all of a sudden, the state Government—aroused by the affronts—decided to cut off its usual grants to the CERC.

Again, the CERC had the last laugh. Last fortnight, the Gujarat High Court ordered the Government to pay the centre a grant of Rs 1,51,600 for the year 1981-82 and thereafter start processing the pending grant applications for 1982-83. The judgement came as a direct result of a writ petition filed by the centre in April this year challenging the Government's stopping of the grants legally due to them.

Aid Provisions: The grants, in fact, are legal and not any favour bestowed by the state Government. The consumer centre has been recognised by the Gujarat Government and allowed funds under the "grant-in-aid" scheme for consumer organisations. In 1980-81, it received Rs 1.15 lakh and, being the biggest consumer organisation in the state, it normally bags 50 per cent of the total annual government budget of Rs 3 lakh for grants to such organisations. Said Manubhai Shah, managing trustee of the centre: "Disbursement of a grant under any government scheme is just a public duty as the legislature has made a budgetary provision for it. Therefore, it cannot be looked upon as an official or personal favour conferred by the Government."

The manner in which the grant was stopped is interesting: in April 1981, the centre submitted 13 applications for grants totalling Rs 6,84,750. In February this year, Rs 1,51,600 was okayed by government officials. The money had to be paid by the end of March, failing which, it would have lapsed. The files were shuffled from department to department. Said Pravin Brambhatt, public relations officer of the CERC: "Various officials said

Solanki had told them that the grant was only to be given after due consideration as CERC was utilising it to file cases against the Government."

A few days before the grant was due to lapse, Brambhatt and Manubhai Shah met Solanki who told them that the cases filed by the consumer centre challenging various government decisions had become very embarrassing. Shah, in turn, assured him that the cases filed were in the larger interests of the public and were directed against the Government. However, no decision was taken and the grant lapsed.

Tough Stand: Finally, when the centre's grant applications for 1982-83 were not even considered, Shah put his foot down. The centre filed a writ in the Gujarat High Court challenging the Government's action. In its petition it contended that one of the main reasons why Solanki had suddenly turned sour was because of



Manubhai Shah:
standing firm

an earlier petition challenging his winding up of the Macchu Dam Enquiry Commission. The Gujarat High Court had decided against the Government and the case had moved into the Supreme Court.

Ironically, the commission had been set up to meet the demand of Solanki himself when Babubhai Patel, the Janata Party was chief minister. Now, trying to justify the winding up

Solanki said the commission had spent Rs 50 lakh in a few months and no useful purpose would be served by continuing it.

The consumer centre has filed—already won—other cases against the state Government as well. The case against the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation challenging the hike in fares was tilted in the centre's favour when the high court, last fortnight, held this rise in fares as illegal and asked the state Government to hold an enquiry. If it comes to the conclusion that the hike was not justified, the Government will have to use the enquiry money collected from the hike towards a special fund for creating more facilities for the travelling public.

Similar cases against price increases are pending against the Gujarat Electricity Board and the Ahmedabad city Board and the Ahmedabad Baroda milk dairies. Said Shah: "Public interest groups will have to realise that they have to fight to survive." And with a tough fighter like the Consumer Education and Research Centre, it looks like the battle is going to be an interesting—rewarding—one.

—RAMESH MENON

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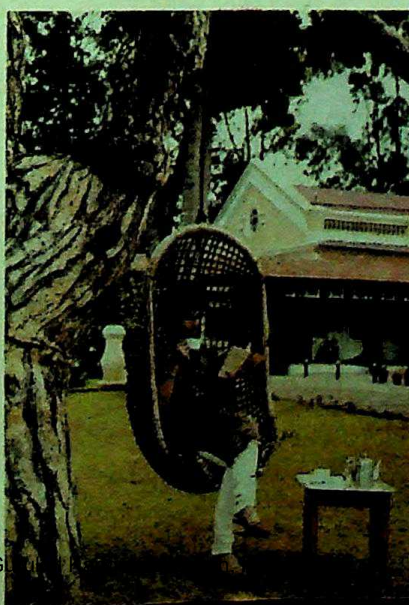
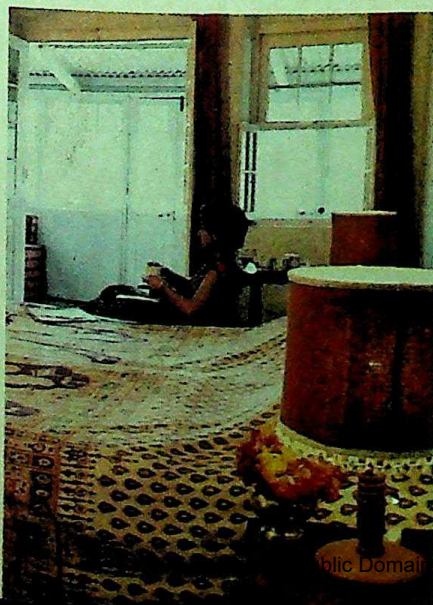
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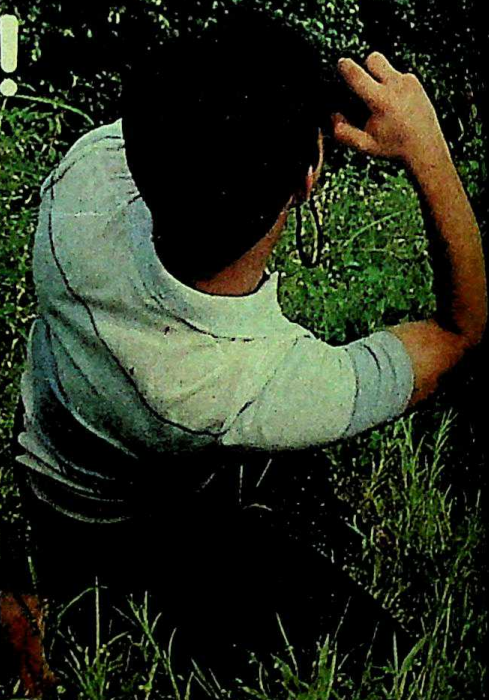
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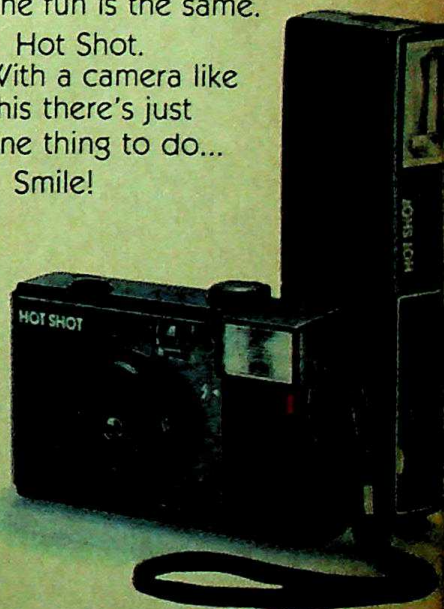
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HARYANA

The Selection Challenge

NORMAL work at the Haryana Public Service Commission (HPSC) has come to a virtual standstill as it girds itself for a legal battle to defend its right to recruit officials for the civil

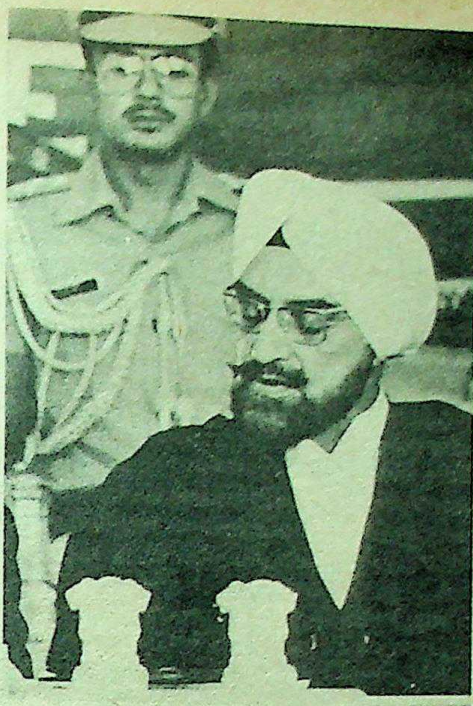
services of the state. The chairman's office is empty last fortnight—even the acting chairman had resigned—and the commission's members were preparing for a Supreme Court battle which could seriously affect the way bureaucrats are selected.

In early December, the country's highest court will sit in final judgement on an issue which has created a furore in the state. The case relates to the selection of 119 recruits for public office which was successfully challenged in the high court by eight unsuccessful candidates. Not only did the high court late last month issue a scathing judgement overturning the selection of the candidates, it went on to question the credentials of the candidates and, what is worse, the members of the HPSC. The Supreme Court on November 1 stayed the high court judgement, ruling that no further appointments were to be made till its final judgement next month, and also gave the authorities time to come up with arguments.

The stay hasn't, however, done much to defuse the sting in the high court judgement. Accepting the petition of the unsuccessful candidates, the high court quashed the selection saying that they "were vitiated by considerations other than merit and were the result of favouritism, casteism and nepotism".

Political Appointments: If this made waves in the state, the court's strictures on the functioning of the commission and politicisation of members' appointments created a storm. In their 23,000-word judgement, Chief Justice S.S. Sandhawalia and Justice J.P. Chand Mital repeatedly stressed that members of the commission were not men of merit, integrity and qualification. The judges came to the "painful" conclusion that members of the commission participated in the selection of their relatives.

The judges felt that marks set aside for the board examination allowed for partiality in favour of petitioners. Analysing the results of the examination, the judges found that all had scored exceptionally well in the written test, securing between 60 and 68.5 per cent, but



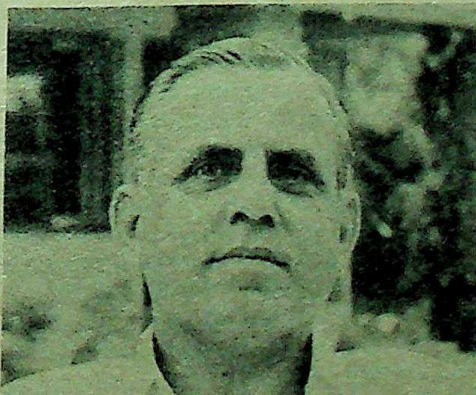
Sandhawalia: stormy judgement

were awarded between 13 and 21 per cent in their interviews.

Indeed, as a result of the interview marks, 10 of the top 16 in the written test were virtually knocked out of the race. On the other hand, 12 of those who finally made it to the top 16 did so largely because of their interview marks.

Among them are relatives of commission members R.D. Gaur and R.C. Marya. Tirlok Nath Sharma, son-in-law of Gaur's sister, jumping from seventeenth in the written test to second position on the merit list. Shakuntala Rani, Marya's daughter-in-law, was awarded 65 per cent by a committee of which Marya was a member. His brother's son-in-law obtained as many marks and was placed fourth among Scheduled Caste candidates.

Inordinate Delay: The court also criticised the fact that though 6,000 had applied when the posts were first advertised in October 1980, the written test was held only in June 1981, when more than 4,000 candidates



Chaudhry: shocked

appeared, and the final list was published only a few months ago.

Further, they felt that too many candidates (1,300) were called for interviews after the written test, as only 119 vacancies were to be filled. They therefore, after quashing the recruitments, asked the commission to announce fresh appointments on the basis of the written test alone.

"Shocked beyond all measure" by the judgement, the acting chairman of the commission, Daulat Ram Chaudhry, resigned. Answering criticism of the manner in which the commission is appointed, he said: "Members of the commission are political appointees but so are the judges. One cannot appoint oneself to such positions. The judgement tries to give an impression that judges are always like Caesar's wife, above suspicion, while members of the commission are ordinary mortals likely to commit any sin."

However, the judges seemed to concur with the petitioners' allegation that "the sacred office of membership of the commission has been downgraded to mere loaves and fishes doled out for reasons of political patronage". The judgement noted that "the caste and political linkage of the present incumbents have not at all been controverted—indeed, the respondents' stand in this context is somewhat lackadaisical and untenable".

Political Hopes: The politicians have prudently kept their opinions on the issue to themselves. After the high court's judgement, there was commotion in the Devi Lal camp. But though the chief minister was unhappy, it was not because the case had been lost. Indeed, as the judgement noted, the "evasive denial of allegations by the state for want of knowledge and shifting the onus to reply on the commission" indicated that Bhajan Lal wanted the results to be struck down.

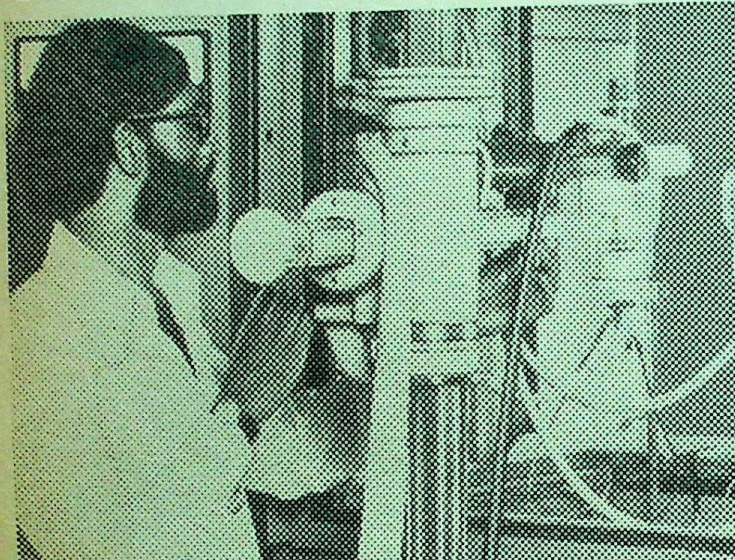
Chairman Balbir Singh Lather had retired and Chaudhry was to retire by the end of the year. This would have given the chief minister a chance to pack the commission with his own men. Therefore, the scrapping of the results would be greatly to his advantage. However, the court did not give the verdict he wanted. Instead of ordering a fresh test, it struck down the oral test and ordered a fresh result on the basis of the written test.

The issue is now before the Supreme Court. But whatever its verdict, the high court's decision remains a valuable pointer to the fact that, as the judges put it, "the dream of the founding fathers in creating the state Public Service Commissions as bulwarks of our Constitution to ensure the independence, integrity and apolitical nature of the civil service stood wholly soured"

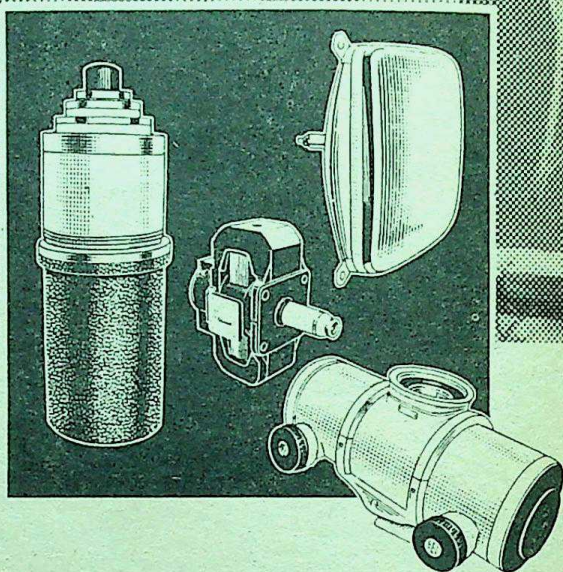
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Expansion Backlash

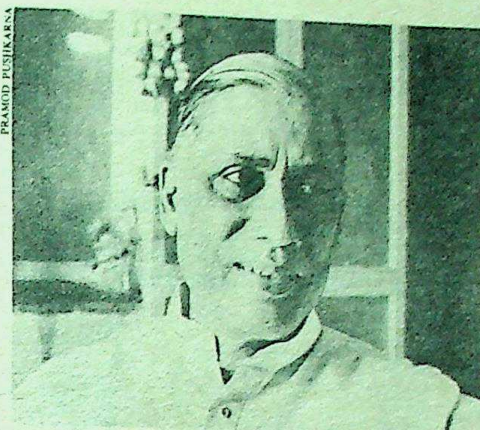
CABINET expansion time—usually the perfect opportunity for chief ministers to win friends and influence people within the party ranks—came and went late last month in Bihar leaving

Chief Minister Chandra Shekhar Singh evidently with fewer friends than before his latest additions to the ranks of his ministerial colleagues. Dissident activity, never far from the limelight in the faction-ridden politics of Bihar, has again reared its head, and Singh has managed in one fell swoop to alienate his partymen across the board, including those who favour and those who oppose former chief minister Jagannath Mishra. So much so that pro-Mishra men were last fortnight threatening to bring a high-powered delegation to Delhi with the proverbial memorandum aimed at dismissing the ministry.

The crisis was triggered off by Singh's long-overdue expansion of his Cabinet by three of Cabinet rank and 12 ministers—state—which takes his ministry to 26. Within hours of the announcement, disgruntled members of the Congress(I) Legislature Party were up in arms against Singh's action. Shortly after the swearing-in ceremony was played out at Raj Bhavan on October 27, more than 50 Mishra supporters met at the residence of former minister Misra to pass a resolution expressing anger at the "outrageously discriminatory attitude of Singh Ministry".

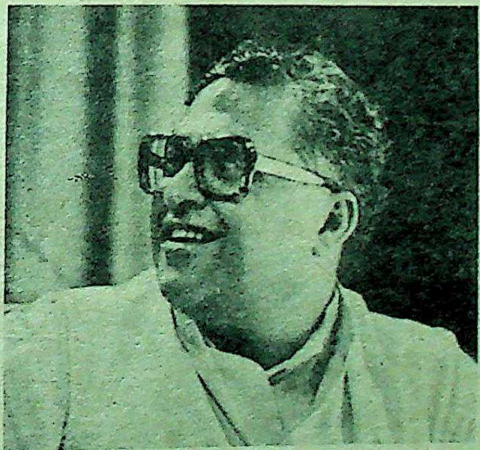
Singh's choice has baffled some, since contrary to all expectations, he reinducted many pro-Mishra die-hards. But in this, he followed a party policy in which while chief ministers fall by the wayside, their colleagues remain secure in their posts. All three new inductees of Cabinet rank—Umeshwar Prasad Verma, Buddhoo Singh and Prabhakar Gupta—were members of the earlier Mishra ministry. Altogether 14 of the 26 members of the two-tier expanded ministry are Singh's men, having belonged to the previous ministry.

Growing Resentment: Unfortunately, in a move that only served to further alienate Mishra opponents, Singh offered Charan Jha a minister of state rank. Supporters of Jha cheered when he turned it down considering such an undistinguished appointment short of an insult. Summing up the disappointment of all those who had opposed Mishra, and could be expected to be disappointed from the expansion, Youth Congress(I) leader Munna Shahi said: "We still have a ministry minus Mishra."



Chief Minister Singh: fewer friends

Those who expected a clean new ministry were also in for a surprise. Verma is yet to be cleared of the corruption charges levelled by 33 legislators in the Assembly and Buddhoo Singh was allegedly involved in what has come to be known as the "spirit scandal". In addition, many ministers are there evidently because they are well-connected. Bandi Shankar Singh and Krishna Nand Jha are sons of the former chief ministers Srikrishna Singh and Vinodanand Jha; B.K. Singh is a relative of former Union minister Bhishma Narain Singh; Dr K.R. Saba is the son of a former minister and freedom fighter;



Mishra: comfortable position

Muktidani Sambrui is the wife of tribal leader Bagan Sambrui, MP; Madan Prasad Singh is a known follower of Sitaram Kesari, treasurer, All India Congress Committee(I); and Awadh Behari Singh is the nominee of another Central minister.

Harijan legislators have been sorely disappointed as well. With a strength of 34 in the legislature party, they have been given just two berths in the ministry, which they feel is too niggardly. Under the leadership of

the old dissident Ram Ratan Ram, the Harijans met to express their resentment at the raw deal the weaker sections had been given.

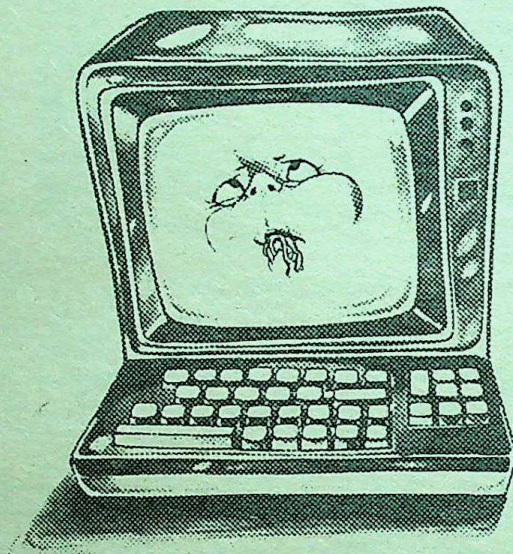
Vulnerable: Following his avowed policy of being disinterested in caste politics, Singh has not bothered to curry favour with his own Rajput community, which is consequently none too well disposed towards him. Further, Singh has not played up to the sensitive regionalist politics either, with the result that the politically sensitive districts of Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Nalanda, Aurangabad, Muzaffarpur, and 10 others have gone unrepresented. On the credit side, Singh's supporters point out that five members from crucial tribal regions, who had been ignored despite their clean image in the previous ministry, have been accommodated in this one.

Meanwhile, Singh faces continued attacks from the Opposition—Karpooori Thakur repeatedly demanded his resignation, and the hitherto friendly Communist Party of India has given a "Save Bihar" call from November 15. Sullyng his Government's record is the alarming number of cases of police violence—opposition leaders cite 14 cases of police firing in the past two-and-a-half months as evidence that Singh is not able to curb police brutality. The violence climaxed in Khageria where the police went on a rampage, resorting to firing in four places in the town—and this, too, has come in handy for detractors of Singh.

Defensive Position: Jagannath Mishra, himself, is by contrast in a rather comfortable position compared with Singh's discomfort. Although Rajiv Gandhi, who is said to be on Singh's side, gave Mishra the royal ignore during his visit to the state last month, it is clear that the former chief minister is sitting pretty with his men back in Singh's Ministry.

Singh is, however, taking the Mishra challenge quite coolly. In a bid to convince critics of his earnest efforts to restore the credibility of the police, the chief minister has called a high-level police conference on November 8 to discuss the situation and provide guidelines for the police force. As for the "lop-sidedness" of his present ministry, Singh last fortnight declared a third round of expansion after a month which will erase anomalies. Observers, however, feel that Singh is on shaky ground, surrounded as he is, by resentment all around. Unless New Delhi comes to his aid, they believe Singh might not be able to resist the continued onslaught for long. Despite the visit of a so-far sympathetic Rajiv Gandhi scheduled for December, it is clear that battle lines have been inexorably drawn—with the trophy—the coveted chief ministership of Bihar the prize being vied for.

—FARZAND AHMED



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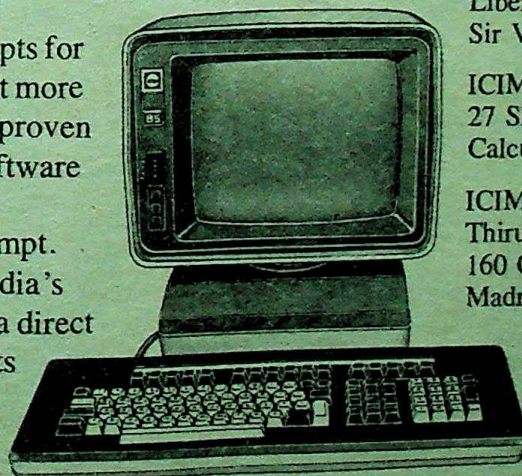
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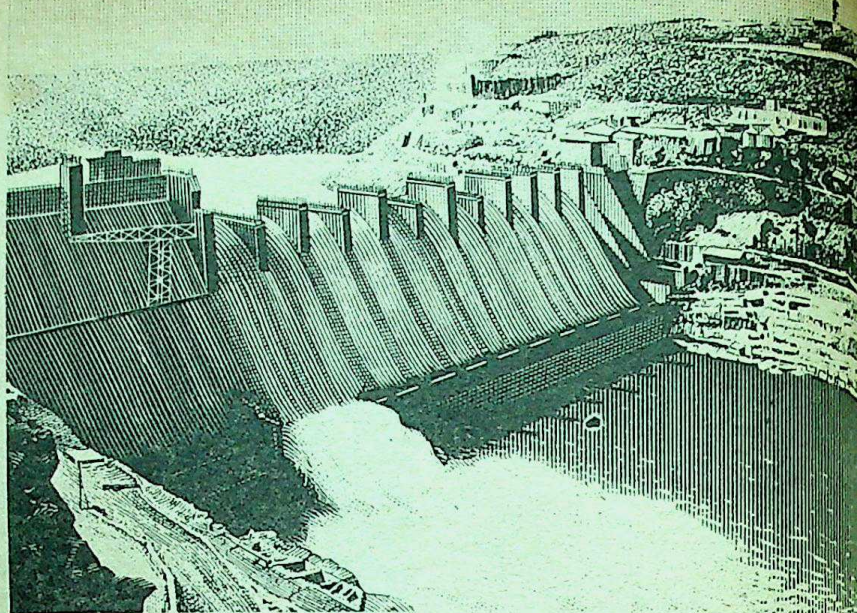
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Parlour Games

A NAIVE visitor to Madras might easily be persuaded to believe that everyone in Madras is on a fitness kick. He could hardly be blamed for making such a mistake. Nearly every part of the city has its own health clubs, saunas and massage parlours which loudly advertise a wide variety of services from haircuts to oil massages and steam baths.

But it needs only a brief visit to one of these parlours to realise that many of the so-called health clubs are not exactly what they are made out to be. Most offer a stunning range of sexual services calculated to arouse even the most jaded. And so successful are they that every day around 300 customers patronise the 60 or so massage parlours in and around Madras City. Says Parthasarathy Iyengar, a regular client: "These masseuses have refined techniques to raise you to new heights of sexual pleasure in a way prostitutes never can."

Only one year ago it looked as if the police had successfully driven the massage parlour owners out of business after a series of raids on the parlours. But there was too much money to give up so easily. Three months ago 20 parlour owners filed separate petitions in the Madras High Court seeking to restrain the police from raiding their premises and interfering with their legitimate business. Justice V. Ramaswami of the High Court granted an interim stay on all the petitions preventing the police from meddling with the conduct of the legitimate business of the parlours. Says Justice Ramaswami explaining his judgement: "The stay is only for the parlours to carry on their legal business, and doesn't authorise them to transgress their limits."

Fresh Revival: But while Ramaswami can hardly be faulted, his judgement appears to have been interpreted by the massage parlour owners as a signal to plunge back into business. Nearly 30 to 40 parlours have sprung up in the last few months. And at least 10 new parlours are about to be opened in the next few weeks. Most

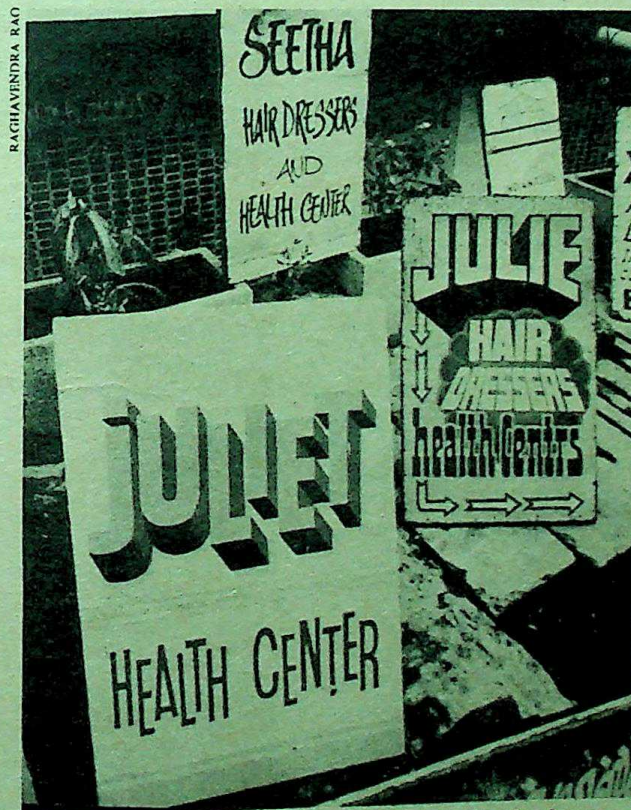


are concentrated in Mount Road but there are others in suburbs as far apart as Kodambakkam and Abhiramapuram. Parlour owners say that competition is stiffer than ever before. Says Saravana Kumar, the owner of Welcome Beauty Parlour and treasurer of the Health Club and Beauty Parlour Owners Association of Madras: "What with

parlours they work for, try to make sure of a minimum clientele and establish their own parlours."

Undoubtedly the economics of the business are still attractive. The 60 parlours together get about 300 customers a day. An oil powder, cream or eau-de-cologne body massage costs Rs 40, Rs 50, Rs 60 or Rs 70 respectively. For 'special treatment' the cost works out to about Rs 100 per customer. Each parlour is centrally located in an important residential or commercial area, and needs at least a couple of thousand rupees for rent and maintenance. Apart from that they also have to pay the masseuses. Each parlour has a minimum of three to four girls, so the salary bill usually adds up to another Rs 2,000 or so. But after all these expenses the parlour owners are still left with a comfortable profit.

Few Pretences: Many of the parlours do not even bother to keep up the pretence of running a legitimate business. The vast majority have three or four dingy curtained cubicles which each have a cot covered with dirt sheets. Some of the shops do not even have a proper water supply, let alone facilities for a steam bath or a sauna. And many of the beauty parlours do not have the high chairs that are a fixture in all modern haircutting saloons. Admits Saravana Kumar: "Of course quite a few parlours are reported to be shady. Looking at the way they are



Billboards for the 'health clubs': booming business

proliferating, one is tempted to believe that. A couple of years ago, there were only one or two parlours in the city. The fact that there are 60 now, speaks volumes."

If there were any doubts at all about what goes on in the parlours and health clubs they are dispelled by inquiries with a few doctors. Nearly every venereologist and practitioner of sexual medicine in the city confirms that approximately 15 to 25 per cent of the patients with sexually transmitted diseases (STD) who come to consult them these days contract their disease from the massage parlours.

A SENIOR professor of venereology attached to a government medical college says: "Over 15 per cent of STD patients who have been coming to me during the last three to four months were infected in massage parlours." A venereology student, who has a private clinic also estimates that about 25 per cent of his patients catch the infection in the massage parlours. Says a distinguished practitioner of sexual medicine in the city who has collected data from his patients: "From the case histories I have drawn up after detailed chats with my patients, I gather that 20 to 25 per cent of my patients, who suffer from venereal diseases, have got their infection from the so-called beauty parlours and health clubs. I have observed this during the last three to six months. Now, I get almost four patients every month owing their disease to the massage. Just six months ago, I used to get only one, or at the most two, patients in a month from the parlours. And a year ago, every STD patient I knew of got his disease from a brothel. It is slowly ending to be the other way round."

Such fears do not seem to worry the clients yet. Business shows no sign whatsoever of slacking. And the customers pay a pretty steep price for the attentions of the girls, whose charges put their services out of the reach of most students and salaried employees. In fact, most of the clients are petty businessmen who have the money to throw away in the pursuit of pleasure.

The girls themselves do not get half so much out of the business. Most are ill-educated and come from very poor families. Many are Anglo-Indians or Malayalees who have been lured into the business from outside the city. On an average the girls pick up between Rs 300 and Rs 500 every month. In addition they can hope for the occasionally lavish tip.

Typical of the girls working in the parlours is Shanti who when asked about herself, says that she is married but that her husband is away, working in another town. She says that she studied up to the eighth standard, and had earlier worked as a cloth quality inspector, checking woven cloth. Shanti explains how she drifted into the massage parlour game ingenuously: "I couldn't adjust to my earlier job, the strain was too much. I wanted a comfortable job which would fetch me some money, and here I am. I had no professional training but I picked up the ropes on the job from the owner of this parlour after joining here. Now I can do any kind of body massage."

The business booms despite determined efforts by the Madras police to curb the pro-

all section, for "committing nuisance in public place." A token fine, ranging from Rs 30 to Rs 70, is levied by the magistrate every accused under this section. Most of them pay the fine without protest and go back to business.

Alternative Options: The police are now toying with other options. They have been floating the idea that the Madras Police Act should be amended suitably incorporating a provision to make it obligatory on the part of a health club or a beauty parlour to obtain specific police permission to offer massages. Before granting permission, the police would then be able to ensure that the prospective masseuses have the requisite training and that there is no underhand dealing intended.

The Madras Corporation is also simultaneously studying a proposal to introduce specific provisions into the Corporation Act laying down conditions for licensing beauty parlours and health clubs. At the moment the corporation licences only the cutting saloons only. It is the contention that the beauty parlours and health clubs obtain to conduct their dubious activities. Precise conditions are stipulated for licensing a health club. For instance, the corporation can inspect and make sure that an applicant for a health club licence has the necessary water supply to operate a steam bath or a sauna bath. Or, for that matter, whether an applicant who wants to run a beauty parlour has trained beauticians who do facials and manicures.



A 'health club' in a business centre: easy money

liferation of the parlours. Most parlours are raided at least a month and sometimes even every week. But D. Radhakrishnan, the deputy commissioner of police (law and order) who has been energetically campaigning against the sleazy joints admits: "It is difficult to catch these people red-handed and book them under the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act. You may lay a trap, but the customers you plant may themselves leak out the plan of the raid to the owner or the masseuse of the parlour concerned. Even if we conduct a straight surprise raid, how much time does it take for the customer who is enjoying himself to straighten up and tie up his towel? By the time we can actually rush and peer into the cubicles, everything will have turned decent, even angelic."

Instead, the police have to content themselves with periodically hauling in the owners and the masseuses under Section 75 of the Madras City Police Act, a blanket hold-

Association has also been thinking along similar lines. The association recently held a meeting that inconclusively discussed the introduction of certain rules and regulations to be followed strictly by the health clubs. One suggestion was that small vibrators should be banned. Another was that the masseuses should have some minimum qualifications. Says a senior member of the association: "We are thinking of imparting training in beauty care and massage, at the end of which certificates will be issued to the students. Unless a girl produces a training certificate she will not be considered for appointment as a masseuse. Otherwise, most of the masseuses are ill-educated fall easy prey to customers with a lot of money to throw away. But such proposals, if they ever materialise will take time. In the meantime, it is business as usual for the parlours with customers slinking in and out at all hours of the day."

—S.H. VENKATRAMAN



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SMOKING IS
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*It was Gavaskar, the real master
Just like a wall
We could not out Gavaskar at all
You know the West Indies could not out
Gavaskar at all.*

—Calypso number composed by Lord Relator after the Indian cricket team's victorious tour to the West Indies in 1971.

THE CALYPSO charmers from the Caribbean might have sung their eulogy all over again last month. Because the song, which celebrated the achievement of the young Sunil Gavaskar, then a raw 21, as he stroked his way to a world record of 774 runs in seven innings (at a Bradmanesque average of 154.8), became a dramatically relevant paean of praise to one of cricket's acknowledged all-time greats. On the sunny, breezy and slightly chilly morning of October 29 at Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla cricket ground, Gavaskar suddenly cut loose to produce a spectacle that could launch many more Calypso jingles, and brought him level with Sir Donald Bradman's 29 Test centuries. And two weeks later, at Ahmedabad, he missed his 30th hundred by 10 runs, but posted a new record Test aggregate of 8,122, eight runs ahead of the previous record-holder Geoff Boycott.

As sheer belligerence and perfectly placed hooks subdued speedster Malcolm Marshall, Gavaskar square-drove Davis on bended knee as the other little master, brother-in-law Viswanath, would have done in his salad days. The thrust to mid-wicket that fetched him his 29th hundred, putting him squarely beside the legendary 'Don', reminded old-timers of Ted Dexter. A cover-drive off Holding on the up, à la Sandeep Patil, a pull and a swipe for a six off Gomes in the Clive Lloyd genre still had people wondering if it was the same Gavaskar they had so depressingly seen sparring and jabbing at short, lifting balls till the other day. And as he strode down the wicket with the stealth and confidence of a panther to whack the ball straight past the bowler with the full flourish of the bat, critics stopped finding parallels with the other great batsmen, past or contemporary. Here was the vintage Sunil Gavaskar himself. As his former captain Ajit Wadekar asked later, "who plays the straight-drive better?"

Impressive Comeback: In a mere 94 balls and 180 frenetic minutes, Sunil Gavaskar had turned the clock back. Just as he was being written off, he staged a comeback with a ferocity that surprised even his fondest supporters. Said a beaming Vivian Richards: "It was a proud moment on the field. It was a fitting knock with which to reach such a landmark. It is a pity we had to be on the other side of it." There also could not have

SUNIL GAVASKAR

Making History

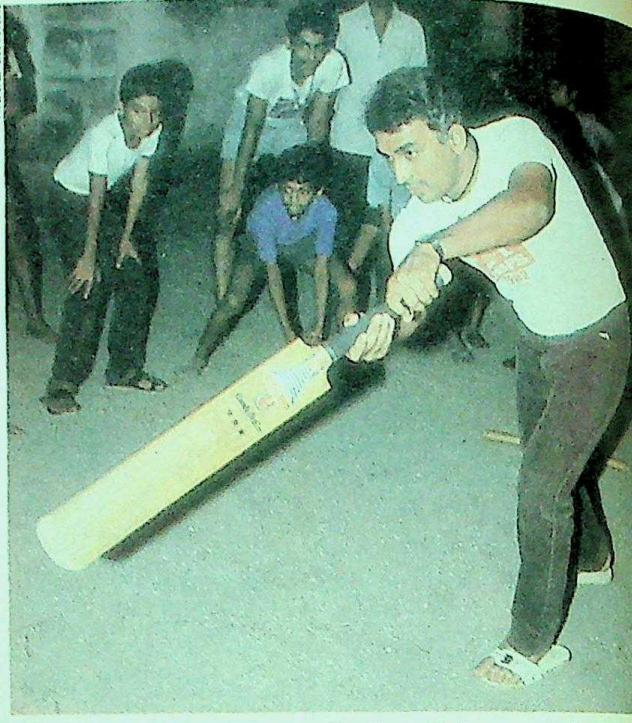
BHAWAN SINGH



NAMAS BHADANT



NAMAS BHADANT



(Clockwise from above) Gavaskar at home with his parents (sitting) and (from left) Vishwanath, niece Salome and sisters Nutu and Kavita; re-enacting a childhood scene in the street where he grew up; and signing autographs at Ferozeshah Kotla

BHAWAN SINGH



been a better compliment to the man who, in his momentous 13-year cricket career had put India on the world cricket map like none else ever could.

Twenty-nine centuries and 8,000 runs may still be considered in terms of individual achievement. But in the process of earning these, he has played a stellar role in almost every moment of glory that India has seen on the cricket field. As her captain for 40 Tests, he won eight and lost six, to go down as the only Indian captain with more victories than his credit than losses. On another plane; he, along with former captain Bishen Singh Bedi, had been instrumental in thoroughly professionalising Indian cricket, bringing in a veritable financial bounty for cricketers and putting officialdom in its place.

Record Play: At 34, and with a generous sprinkling of grey on his pate that has a suggestion of baldness, Sunil Gavaskar holds virtually every major batting record in the world (see box). Another three-figure knock will take him past the record which he shares with Sir Donald Bradman. He already has the highest aggregate in Tests, 8,122, well ahead of Boycott with 8,114 and Sobers with 7,032. He shares with Boycott the record for the highest number of century partnerships in Test cricket: 47.

Another world record Gavaskar holds is the highest number of times a batsman has crossed the 50-run mark in Tests: with 29 centuries and 36 fifties he is one up on Boycott (22 centuries and 42 fifties). As if that was not enough, this year he has scored 1,038 runs in Tests, giving him a thousand runs in a calendar year four times, consolidating a record he already holds.

His two centuries in a Test thrice too is a world record and so is his 16 centuries abroad—Bradman had only 12. As he reached 104 in Delhi, Gavaskar had also become the youngest in the world to have passed the 8,000-run mark, and he holds practically every Indian batting record—barring the one for the highest score which survives in the name of Vinoo Manohar (231).

And yet, a relaxed Gavaskar said most emphatically after the comeback knock in Kotla, that he did not go for records. "There is enough pressure on you as such as you go out to bat. It gets worse if you think of records. I suppose a big score or a record is just a bonus that comes your way", he says modestly, underlining the fact that he never even sees the score-board. Says he: "In fact, when I got the century in Delhi, I thought I had gone to 82 from 78." Said an admiring Vivian Richards: "Every time you watch him you learn something. Just the other day he batted at Kotla and I learnt that he does not even look at the score-board. Such are his powers of concentration."

*I congratulate
Sunil Gavaskar on his
achievement. For many years
I have admired his technique,
attitude and dedication. He is
the world's greatest opening
batsman; an ornament to
the game.*

—SIR DONALD BRADMAN

*I think you over-react when
he fails. That is what the game
is all about—giving and taking
a few blows. But he must be
a tough-minded fella.*

—VIVIAN RICHARDS

IT WAS this phenomenal power of concentration that the observant noticed so clearly as Gavaskar made his debut at Port of Spain, Trinidad, in 1971, and even Sir Gary Sobers, who became his early benefactor by dropping him in almost every big innings that he played at his team's cost, was one of the first to see that. Making the most of Sobers's lapses and a pace attack that was hostile but did not have the usual Caribbean venom, Gavaskar hit those 774 runs forgetting the nightmare of a painful whitlow on an index finger that kept him out of the first Test and had very nearly aborted his career. Recalls Gavaskar: "The doctor in New York told me if I had come a little later it would have become gangrenous and he would have had to amputate the finger." But from then on, there were great hindrances—broken fingers kept him out of three of the four Tests India played against the West Indies in 1974 and a fractured foot, later, again threatened to cut short his career. He soon overcame a short slump in the series in England and posted his first thousand in his 11th Test and then, till he got his 5,000th run, there was something monotonous in his consistency—with practically an additional thousand every 19 innings.

Although Gavaskar himself is not so sure of it, his performance peaked in the 1977-80 period which began as he took three centuries in four Tests against Australia, down under with Jeff Thomson bowling full blast. Perhaps reassured by the discovery of a gritty opening partner in Chetan Chauhan "who was unruffled even if each of the six balls in an over flew at 100 miles per hour", Gavaskar systematically set about taking the Australian attack apart. Such was his judge-

ment of the outgoing ball that the weary Australian pacemen had no choice but to aim at his stumps where he unleashed the wide array of strokes in front of the wicket and off his legs. Exclaimed Trevor Bailey: "This little master is such a champion that he forces the bowlers to come on the stumps and then takes them apart in the mid-wicket and square-leg region." Australian Keith Miller, one of the great fast bowlers of all time, when asked where he would like to bowl to Gavaskar, paid him what was perhaps the greatest tribute. Said he: "Bowl? I would just like to stand in the slips to enjoy his batting. And there will be no work to do."

This was also the beginning of the glorious golden era of Indian cricket as, after being two Tests down, India drew level, registering their first wins over Australia on their wickets, and then, in the fourth Test, faltering within inches of the victory target of 469 after one of cricket history's most exciting run chases.

World's Best: Gavaskar reached the peak in 1979, accumulating 1,555 runs in 18 Tests and even though there is some substance in the argument that he benefited from the flight of some of the West Indian and Australian top-notchers to the Packer circus, there is no denying that during this period he was the world's best batsman by all standards—for many of these runs had been obtained while he was under the burden of captaincy. In fact, even as the glorious mid-'70s ended with the humiliating 2-0 defeat in Pakistan under Bedi's captaincy, Gavaskar remained the only Indian who returned home with his head held high (447 runs, average 89.4).

Even more than the frequency and consistency of his scoring, the significant aspect of Gavaskar's contribution to Indian cricket is that he has been able to give his best at times when India has needed it most. In all the three 400-run chases in the last innings in which India has been involved, Gavaskar has played a stellar role, beginning with a century in Port of Spain in 1976—the match that India went on to win. But perhaps his greatest knock of all time came later, at the Oval in 1979, shortly before he was given the captaincy. He hit up a chanceless 221, his highest in the Tests, as India faced a total of 400-plus in the last innings, and even though India fell short of the target by nine runs with two wickets still in hand at close, Indian cricket had earned for itself respect in England like never before. "Sunny shines India" screamed the headline in the *Daily Telegraph*. But Gavaskar himself would not call it his greatest knock. "My best was the 101 at Old Trafford in 1974 in conditions tailor-made for fast-bowling. Or even the 57 I scored at the same ground in 1971. The

STATISTICS

Record Player

WHEN 'S.M. Gavaskar' walks out to bat, statisticians get busy. After all, few cricketers can have given them more work than the diminutive opener who, since his electrifying debut on the sunbathed grounds of the Caribbean over 12 years ago, has amassed 8,122 runs in 95 Tests and one inning in 23 series, 13 of which were abroad. Gavaskar has made an average of 52.40 runs each of the 168 times he has gone out to bat. He has hit—everybody with a transistor radio must know this by now—29 centuries, including three double centuries, and 36 fifties. His highest score is 221, he has taken 81 catches and, wonder of wonders, has done one thing that the Don hasn't—he's taken one wicket in Test.

Those are the bare facts; now the records:

- The highest number of centuries in Tests: 29, equalling Don Bradman's record. Behind the two are Gary Sobers (26), Walter Hammond, Colin Cowdrey, Greg Chappell and Geoff Boycott (all 22), and that other great opening batsman, Len Hutton, with 19. Incidentally, Gavaskar has the best century: Tests ratio after Bradman.

- The highest Test aggregate, 8,122, ahead of Boycott with 8,114 and Sobers with 8,032.

- The only batsman to score 1,000 runs and more in Tests in a calendar year four times: 1,024 runs in 1976, 1,044 runs in 1978, 1,555 runs in 1979 and 1,038 runs in 1983, with one inning and three Tests still to go.

- He has made the fastest thousand in Tests, in just 78 days and six Tests, from Faisalabad, Pakistan, to Calcutta, India, when he scored 1,014 runs at an average of 112.67. Bradman had done it earlier in

seven Tests.

- The only batsman to hit a century in each innings of a Test thrice: 124 and 220 at Port of Spain in 1971, 111 and 137 at Karachi in 1978, and 107 and 182 not out at Calcutta in 1978-79.

- He is the only batsman to hit three hundreds in consecutive innings twice.

- Gavaskar has scored 50 or more runs a record 65 times (29 hundreds and 36 fifties). Boycott has done it 64 times (22 hundreds and 42 fifties).

- Gavaskar has figured in 47 century stands, equalling Boycott's record.

- He is only the second batsman to score 4,000 and more runs abroad, and could soon become the batsman with the highest number of runs scored abroad: 4,222 runs from 49 Tests to Walter Hammond's 4,245 from 41 Tests.

- He has the best series aggregate for a batsman making his debut: 774 against the West Indies in 1970-71.

- He has the second highest series average: 154.80, against the West Indies in 1970-71. The leader is—who else?—Don Bradman with 201.50 against South Africa in 1931-32.

- He has the highest aggregate against the West Indies, 2,477, brushing past Boycott with 2,205.

- He has the highest aggregate in India. Brother-in-law G.R. Viswanath at 6,080 is over 2,000 runs behind.

- He has the best batting average in India: 52.40.

- He is India's most successful captain—the only one to win more Tests than he lost: 8:6. He also ties with the Nawab of Pataudi for the most number of Tests as captain: 40.

- He has scored the most runs in a Test of any Indian: 344 against the West Indies in 1971, 124 in the first innings and 220 in the other.

- He is the only Indian to score a century on debut against three countries.

- His 205 against the West Indies in Bombay in 1978 is the highest individual score by an Indian captain.

- He is the first Indian to carry his bat through an innings: 127 not out against Pakistan at Faisalabad in 1982.

- He has played the longest Test innings for an Indian: against England in 1981, made 172 runs in 702 minutes.

- He has scored the most for an Indian in a day in Tests: 179 against England at the Oval in 1979, the fifth highest.

- He is the first Indian and the first batsman to score a hundred against Test-playing countries.

- He is the only Indian to score hundreds in successive Tests.

- Gavaskar has the highest first-class aggregate in India: 22,299.

- He has the highest number of first-class hundreds in India: 70.

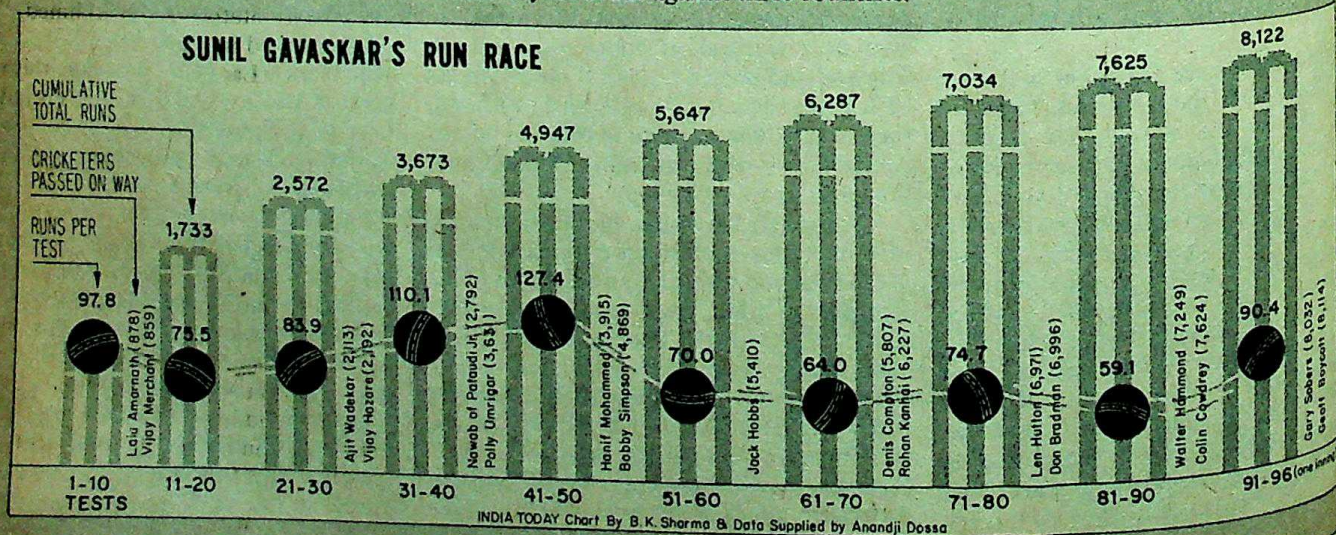
- He has the highest individual score in the Ranji Trophy: 340 against Bengal in 1981-82.

- He has played the largest number of Tests of any Indian: 96. Cowdrey holds the world record (114), followed by Boycott (108).

There are a few records that Gavaskar does not hold. He does not have the highest batting average in the world; Bradman's is an incredible 99.94. He does not own the largest individual score in Tests: Gary Sobers has made 380 not out. He does not even hold the individual Test score record, which is held by Vinoo Mankad: 231. There are other records where Gavaskar is tenth in a list of twelve where Bradman's figures no less than four times. He has scored the fastest hundred in Tests, the fifth fastest—his recent onslaught of 121 against Marshall and company in Delhi last month. And he has not, as yet, held the largest number of catches in Tests, only 81; Cowdrey has held 120.

—JAGANNATH DURGA

SUNIL GAVASKAR'S RUN RACE



INDIA TODAY Chart By B.K. Sharma & Data Supplied by Anandji Dossa

wicket was green, atmosphere humid, Price bowled fast and fur really flew," he recalls. **Plodding Progress:** But with all his technical accomplishments and run-getting, Gavaskar's was never a spectacular presence on the wicket, barring that explosive innings at Kotla. Says Bishen Singh Bedi: "He was an accumulator, not a destroyer of bowling. Not like Vivian Richards who may destroy you, or may not. Viv would give you a chance, Sunil won't. He grinds the opposition over a longer period, but much more effectively." Basically, as Gavaskar himself admits, his approach to batting has been technical, correct and defensive, shorn of the pyrotechnics of a Patil or "King" Richards. "I am not the greatest. I am content to defend against a good ball. But a great batsman can hit it for four runs," he admits modestly. Says Frank Keating, the well-known cricket columnist of *The Guardian*: "Sunil does nothing particularly flamboyant, but just gets his feet in position—and his head out of the way—and makes runs."

It is probably Geoffrey Boycott, the contemporary and controversial Englishman, who comes closest to him, and hardly anybody, barring Mansur Ali Khan "Pataudi" ranks Boycott higher. Gavaskar has the same concentration but a decidedly less selfish approach to his batting. "He certainly plays many more strokes than Boycott," says Michael Holding, visibly piqued by the comparison. "I wouldn't even think of comparing the two. Boycott has no natural ability—he is a man-made cricketer," asserts Farokh Engineer, former Indian and Lancashire wicket-keeper who has seen enough of both Gavaskar and Boycott. Gavaskar's forte is his concentration that the legendary West Indian batsman Rohan Kanhai calls "very, very, very great", and footwork which Keating calls "almost an art form, never faulted". Even before he went out to play his first series, the correctness of the technique was there for everyone to see.

The Discovery: Perhaps the first to see the enormous talent in his five-and-a-half foot frame was none else than West Indian Conrad Hunte, who watched Gavaskar play a short innings for Bombay University against Osmania in the Vizzy Trophy final at Hyderabad. A member of the West Indies team then touring India, he was the chief guest at the final and lavishly praised Gavaskar in his speech even though the callow youngster, with fuzz on his cheeks, had scored very few runs. It was a great compliment for Gavaskar who had watched series then being played. "His backlift, so straight and high, was the thing I had my eye glued on, and also the way his front foot was always where the ball was pitched. I must confess that I have tried to model my

batting on Hunte's style," admits Gavaskar.

But over the years, as he grew in stature, he also succeeded in evolving his own inimitable style of batting—a still head, tremendous eye, the art-form foot-work and inexhaustible, sometimes irritating store of patience. His critics—of whom there is no dearth—have always castigated him for having been a slow scorer, a pedestrian accumulator guided solely by his insatiable appetite for runs and records. But even if the Kotla innings was too isolated an instance to silence the critics, a look at his scoring pattern in his initial days when he used to hook, cut and glance freely should be sufficient to prove Clive Lloyd's contention that he "has every stroke in the book".

Unrelenting Pressure: It was due to the pressures of being the team's only consistent run-getter, the perennial demand that he see off not only the first but also the second new ball, in order to safeguard the ever-so-brittle middle-order, and later of the captaincy that he resorted to the tremendous self-denial of cutting out most of his belligerent strokes—limiting the region between cover and mid-wicket for run-getting. Wrote seasoned cricket scribe K.N. Mohlajee in *The Statesman* after his Kotla innings: "One stroke that he unleashed after a decade of self-denial was the hook." Said Rohan Kanhai: "It is wrong to say that he does not have strokes. He has all of them. Off the front-foot and back-foot, on the onside and offside. And he is very, very competent playing each one of them."

Interestingly, the stodgy veneer of defence that Gavaskar began acquiring towards the end of his first Australian tour as a member of the Rest of the World team shortly after his debut in West Indies came following advice from the great Don himself. Recalls Gavaskar: "He asked me not to be over-anxious as I had been in the earlier part of the tour, or over-defensive as I had been later. He suggested that a judicious blend

of attack and defence would do me good."

Defensive Tactics: In his quest for the right mix, Gavaskar perhaps made the mistake of becoming ultra-defensive, but the fact is that while the brittle Indian batting line-up needed runs from his blade, it always needed his staying powers to keep one end going. Consequently, he never grew into a batsman who could collar bowling with sheer offence. "Maybe that was because of his short stature," surmises Clive Lloyd. But Vivian Richards differs: "It just does not depend on your physique. It only depends on the rhythm in your body." Adds Andy Roberts, whom Gavaskar called the most formidable paceman he has ever faced: "Everton Weekes was short, so was Bradman." But Gavaskar himself admits that a few more inches would have helped him pull the spinners better.

While he did curb the strokes in the interest of the team he did, over the years, develop some kind of abhorrence, not fear, for short-pitched fast bowling, the first genuine taste of which India got in the series in the West Indies in 1976, when the four-man pace battery of Holding, Daniel, Roberts and Holder maintained a sustained onslaught, making the ball come onto the batsman's chin from good-length, giving a short batsman like Gavaskar no chance to score at all. And when this was turned into sheer bodyline by Malcolm Marshall bowling round the wicket earlier this year, the master was found wanting. In the 12 encounters before the Delhi Test, this year, the same Marshall whom he had whacked for 40 runs in two overs in 1979 had got him out cheaply nine times. Said Andy Roberts to *INDIA TODAY*: "His weakness is his body. That is why a fast bowler would attack him there." But it wasn't so simple because, over the years, Gavaskar had refrained from using the helmet against the world's fastest bowlers, avoiding the fast-rising ball by instinct in a manner that, according to the famous Pakistani cricket commentator Iftikhar Ahmed, "was an art perfected into a science".

Costly Lapses: Yet, of late, this very gift seemed to have left him, as did his judgements of the ball leaving the off-stump which was considered unparalleled in contemporary cricket. He perished repeatedly, sparring at outgoing ones or jabbing at the short ones lifting to his chin. Suddenly, his wrought-iron armour began showing chink that none had anticipated. He developed the suicidal shuffle towards the off-stump that allowed fast bowlers to knock out his leg-stump if they did not get him out edging. "I sort of did not know where my off-stump was," he confesses now. And it seemed a pity, over, with those two deadly spells the West Indies speed merchant Marshall

As far as opening batsmen are concerned he has been the best since the '70s. I rate him among the three best batsmen in the world today. Richards is on the top, followed by Ian Chappell and Gavaskar. He is very straight and knows where his off-stump is.

—IMRAN KHAN

INTERVIEW

"I'd like to call it a day"

INDIA'S most prolific batsman still flashes the engagingly boyish smile that, along with his batting, won hearts on and off the field over a decade ago. The grin was very much in evidence when, after a hard day in the field against the West Indies during the second Test in Delhi, Sunil Gavaskar met Senior Editor S. VENKAT NARAYAN, Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA and JAGANNATH DUBASHI for two hours. Excerpts:

Q. If you were asked, what have you done for Indian cricket, what would you say?

A. To believe in our own ability: maybe that's been my contribution to Indian cricket. It was a process which started during Ajit Wadekar's captaincy and has continued over the years.

Q. You've made 29 centuries, 8,000 runs. What next?

A. I don't really know, I haven't even given it a thought. Maybe I'd like to take 100 catches but right now it seems difficult to achieve.

Q. When did you start thinking about records?

A. People say I go for records but, honestly, I don't, because it means putting more pressure on yourself. I just go out and play; if I get 100 or 50, it's a bonus.

Q. You don't look at the scoreboard?

A. No. This is a habit from school and it has proved very good because I am not tense when I am in the 90s. Like in this case (the 29th century), I thought I had gone from 78 to 82.

Q. Why have you brought back many of the strokes you had earlier cut out?

A. After the World Cup I had gone to the United States for a month. I did a bit of introspection and I said to myself: Sunny boy, you don't have very many years left to play cricket. Sunny boy, it is about time that you enjoyed yourself a bit while playing and hitting a few shots. I have always kept away many shots mainly because they were not percentage shots. For example, the hook shot. During my first Test series in the West Indies I got most of my runs with hooks. But now the responsibility is that much less because we have got Jimmy (Mohinder) Amarnath, Dilip Vengsarkar, Sandeep Patil who make our batting stronger.

Q. How many years do you give yourself in Test cricket?

A. I would really like to call it a day at the end of this year. We've had a lot of

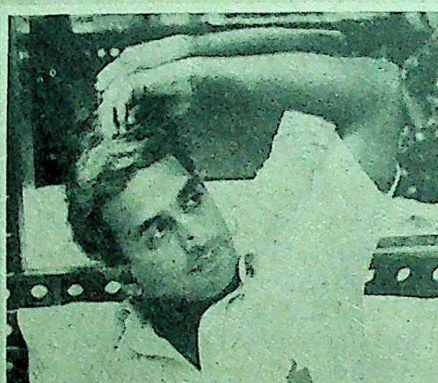
cricket recently and the next series is a year away. It might be a little premature to say anything right now.

Q. What are your retirement plans?

A. I don't think I would make a good coach. But I would like to open an indoor stadium in Bombay to train young and promising chaps to play cricket.

Q. You've been playing cricket for over 12 years now. What difference do you find between Test cricket played in 1971 and 1983?

A. I don't think cricket has changed really. But perhaps the technique has changed, for instance, the bat and pad technique. The fielding has improved due to one-day matches. Running between the wickets is also much better. But at the



same time I feel that the standard of batting has gone down. Nobody is building up to big innings. Everybody is making attractive 30s and 40s and very few big 100s are made nowadays. If at all they are made they are always made against India.

Our attitude towards the game has improved as well. Previously we were just happy to play a Test. Now with a few victories under our belt we look for a win. We may not be able to get one because we don't at the moment have the attack and our batting too is not as confident as, say, a year ago but still we look for a win.

Q. Do you think Indians lack the killer instinct because of our cultural traditions?

A. Yes, to a certain extent, because right from childhood we are told to be nice to people.

Q. We've gone for 25-odd Test matches without a win. Do you think our bowling has the ability to get the other side out twice?

A. We have Kapil who has the capacity of hauling in five wickets in an innings. Others might chip in with a

couple of wickets but I don't think they will be able to bowl a fairly good batting side out twice in a match.

Q. Would you say you have evolved your own style of play?

A. I have my own way of playing. There are blokes who pick the ball better than me and can play an attacking shot off a good delivery. I can only defend it. Vishy (Vishwanath) can play an attacking shot off a good delivery and that's why I rate him the best, Sandeep (Patil), Kapil (Dev), Ian Botham, they all do.

Q. If you had been three or four inches taller would your style have been different?

A. Yes, I probably would have got a lot more runs out of the pull shot which I don't play as much, particularly off the spinners when they bowl a fraction short of a length. Because I am not tall—I'm 5 ft 5 inches, by the way—I am not able to go back and take advantage of that. If I had been a little taller I would have been able to hit it above the close-in fielders being short I find the ball tends to come on to me.

Q. Which is your most glorious hour?

A. When we won the Test against England in 1971: the last hour after lunch. I was only 22 years old and we never expected to win.

Q. And the most terrible?

A. Last year in Pakistan when we collapsed in Hyderabad to lose the series. I couldn't believe it.

Q. Who was your best opening partner?

A. Chetan Chauhan, who is the calmest person around. Moreover, he was senior to me and didn't hesitate to advise me. Anshuman Gaekwad is yet another person who I get along with very well. The others, I find, hesitate to come up to say I'm playing badly because I'm senior to them. But lately I started to go over to my partner after each over to exchange notes on how I played.

Q. What are the grounds where you like playing most?

A. Port of Spain in Trinidad. Eden Gardens of Calcutta is very nice. When it's green, Delhi is very good too. Adelaide in Australia.

Q. You've started wearing protective headgear lately.

A. I have a skull cap which I have started using this season. It is much lighter, like a helmet, made of fibreglass. I don't wear a helmet because I don't find it comfortable.

Q. How do you rate your career as captain?

A. Well, it was an up and down thing. We did well under my captaincy in India and I thought we did fairly well in

Tests against Australia because I think it was the first time we drew a series against Australia.

Q. How do you rate Kapil Dev's captaincy?

A. Well, he did an excellent job in the Presidential Cup. Winning that trophy was a great shot in the arm. At the same time great expectations have gone up. I think he has been unfortunate that two of the three series he has been captain in have been against the West Indies, which is one of the strongest teams. With lack of attack and fast bowlers in his team how much can a captain do?

Q. Who are the other captain material, say five years from now?

A. Kapil himself is quite young. And there's Ravi Shastri who is 21; he is the only guy who looks to me like captain material. He was always a good batsman in Bombay. We never thought he would do that well in Test cricket.

Q. Are you sensitive to press criticism?

A. I avoid reading the daily reports while playing in Test matches because I feel they tend to influence your mind.

Q. Who influenced you most in life?

A. My parents. Because they have given me just about everything, from encouragement to criticism. If I'm playing badly, I go to my father. He's seen me since I was a kid.

Q. Does your father still pay you Rs 100 for every century you make?

A. Nowadays it's a little different: my mother pays me a rupee for every run that I score in a series.

Q. What role does your wife play in your life?

A. She likes the game and so she comes and watches the game. But there have been situations when I've been upset and tense; then she's around to discuss that particular thing with me and help me out.

Q. Are you interested in politics?

A. Christ, I'm crazy about politics.

Q. Would you consider taking to politics as a career?

A. No. But I would like sportsmen to be represented in Parliament by people who can have faith in such as Manmohan Singh, Nandu Natekar, Brian Jones or Mike Ferreira. People like these will do an excellent job.

Q. Are you still a teetotaler?

A. I don't drink spirits, beer etc. But I drink champagne.

Q. You drink champagne after a win otherwise too?

A. Most of the time, after a win. I've got to be an occasion to celebrate. Otherwise, it's an expensive drink!

bowled in the first Test of the current series in Kanpur. In two innings, he lasted for just seven balls. To cricket-watchers it seemed to be the end of an era as in the second innings, a Marshall bouncer sent his bat flying and the ball lobbed behind to be caught by Winston Davis. Yet again Gavaskar had failed to get the measure of the real pace.

"He was never worried by pace. But now the sheer monotony of short-pitched bowling had got him frustrated. Cricketers abroad are professional; they made video tapes and studied his batting. In fact it was Alan Davidson who advised the Australians to overwhelm him with persistent, short-pitched stuff," says his father Manohar Gavaskar, a marketing executive with a textile firm and the keenest watcher of his game. He recalls how, after studying Sunil's performance in the West Indies, he sent him to Pune to seek the advice of former Maharashtra Ranji player Kamal Bhandarkar, now over 70, who advised him to start hooking. Thus the onslaught at Kotla was no sudden flourish, his attack was planned. Says Vasu Paranjpe, his friend, colleague at Nirlon and captain of his Dadar Union Club for over 15 years: "After the one-day International at Srinagar, Sunil came and told me that he had never seen a leather ball travel as fast as the first one from Marshall did at Srinagar. I told him, now with four fast bowlers operating for one team it is impossible to contain them by defence. You will have to attack. But I am sure even Sunil will pinch himself if he saw the video film of his innings—there was a touch of desperation about it." As he said after the 29th century, Gavaskar now intends to enjoy his batting. He certainly is tired of being on the defensive against fast men. Even Lloyd admits: "If he is fed-up, it is understandable. Who likes fast bowling?"

BUT GLORIOUS though Gavaskar's achievements are, it is fatuous to compare him with Bradman, as Gavaskar himself admits. Bradman had got his runs much faster, and in a much more commanding fashion with an average almost twice as high as his. Yet it is to be said in Gavaskar's favour that he has scored his runs at a time when, to quote the septuagenarian doyen of Indian cricket Vijay Merchant, "Cricket had ceased to be a game." The pressures on a cricketer have certainly increased tremendously. Says Merchant: "You also cannot forget that Bradman often came out to bat when Woodfull and Ponsford (the Australian openers) had already put up nearly 200 runs, and the ball was fairly old. He rarely had to face fresh new ball attackers as Sunil has always done. And standards of pace bowling and fielding have improved today just like that of the athletes."

Besides, as old-timers point out, Brad-

man was never forced into batting under the kind of pressure that has been inflicted on Gavaskar. Confessed a team-mate: "You can only sympathise with him. In these 167 innings, each time he went out to open the innings, he knew he had to stay: for if he got out early, most of us might just follow in a procession." It is because of these factors that many of his supporters rate him higher than Ian Chappell, Doug Walters, Rohan Kanhai and Ken Barrington. Says Andy Roberts: "He has got 8,000 runs, and none of them came against India who are the easiest to score off." Added Freddie Trueman, whose record of 307 Test wickets stood for 15 years before being broken by Lance Gibbs (309): "He would surely have had a lot more runs if he had the Indian attack to play against." But Gavaskar dismisses the suggestions with a wave of the hand and says: "Even our attack was pretty formidable when the spinners were at their peak."

There are few contemporaries who can match his concentration which is his greatest forte. Moreover, he knows his limitations and, the greatest of all, has been consistent over a period of time.

—CLIVE LLOYD

Changing Game: Another change in the basic approach to the game from Bradman's times is the present-day defensive approach of both the bowlers and fielders. In the old days the bowlers kept on attacking the stumps and maintained close-in fielders even if the batsman was on the rampage. Today, even a few attacking strokes scatter the fielders to the run-saving positions in the deep, and get the bowler aiming away from the stumps.

But while Gavaskar got his runs under more pressure and against superior attacks, the technical conditions to get these had become better over the years. In fact, the Gavaskar decade is also the decade of major change in the way cricket is played, in the technical sense. Says Merchant: "The bats and balls are better now. So is the protective equipment which includes the introduction of the helmet. And please note that the wickets are covered all the time now. They are not even exposed to dew, which was not the case in our times." Gavaskar too says the tools of the game have become better with the time. "The bats are better but the balls are often defective. The boots are not of very good

quality," he says, and mentions that he is designing new boots for cricket, himself.

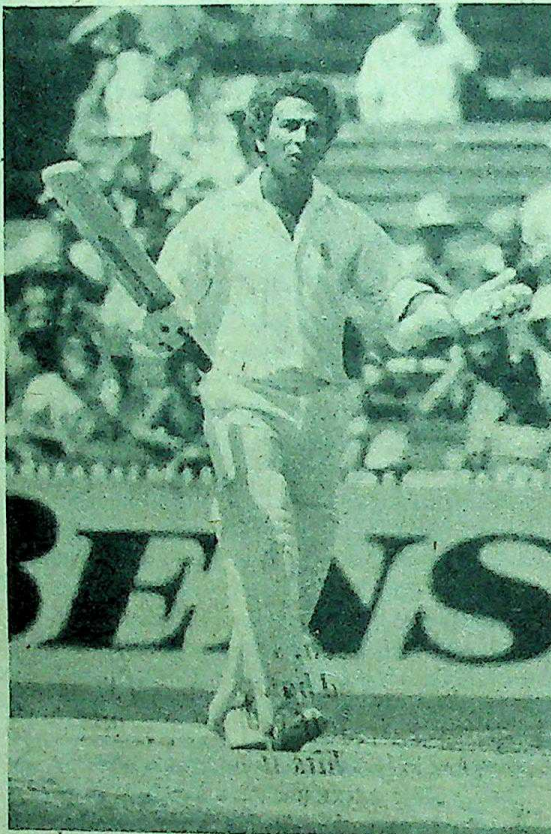
New Equipment: The greatest change by far has come in the quality of the protective equipment. Leg-guards are much lighter than the hockey-goalkeeper-variety in vogue in W.G. Grace's days. And the helmet is not the only new introduction. There are thigh-guards, chest-guards and extended gloves for the arm, protecting the entire region up to the elbow. Observes Merchant wryly: "Today the batsman comes to the pitch as if dressed for battle."

If all this helped Gavaskar get his thousands in greater comfort and security, he has also had to contend with the growing pressures of professionalism in the game, a process which began, at least in India, only after Gavaskar's arrival on the scene. In retrospect, it was all perhaps largely because of him, apart from the ebullient Bishan Bedi. From a mere Rs 750 when he began playing, a cricketer today stands to lose Rs 15,000 if he is dropped for just one Test, and the thought weighs heavily on his mind as he goes out to play. Besides, his performance also affects the consumer goods he promotes, the company which hired him to boost its image, the publications he writes for or edits, and income from numerous franchises and endorsements.

But Gavaskar, whom Bedi calls "a thoroughbred professional, very, very British", seems to wallow in the pressures of professionalism. In fact he has been a kind of a trend-setter in teaching fellow cricketers how to translate popularity and success, which can last for only a small part of their lives, into hard cash. He works for Nirlon as deputy manager (public relations) and also edits *Indian Cricketer*, a monthly glossy brought out by the Aajkaal group of Calcutta. Besides he is on contract with the manufacturers of Thums Up, sporting their equipment and clothes, acts in their advertisement films and models, among other things, for upholstery and mattresses. While Ramesh Chauhan, chairman of Parle Exports, who manufactures Thums Up, would not disclose the amount involved in the contract, it is likely to be fairly substantial. Viren C. Jagar, managing director of Nirlon, says his company spends nearly a lakh a year on Gavaskar but it is worth it. Says he: "This brings so much goodwill for the company. And if he goes to Delhi on company's work to meet government officials and others, it is that much easier because they would all like to talk to him."

Ingenuous Businessman: But Gavaskar's ingenuity and shrewd businessman's mind will not allow him to limit himself to a job, endorsements and editing. He is busy de-

signing new sportsgear, bearing his logo—a spinning cricket ball with "Sunny" written on it. The gear is being sold at "Sunny's Sports Boutique" in Pune which he opened in partnership with Shubhangi Kulkarni, former Indian women's cricket team captain, and another friend, Raju Mehta. In fact, on the eve of the one-day International at Baroda he was releasing his new cricket boots, named "SG 7000" and intends to open more branches all over the country, besides giving franchises to major sports goods sellers in major towns where "it is expensive to open new establishments". Says Ajit Wadekar, the State Bank officer who also endorses Vimal suiting: "From just a game, cricket has now become a bread-and-butter



Lbw to Lillee 70 at Melbourne: near walkout

proposition. But what is wrong with it?" But Merchant does not agree: "In our days we played cricket for the love of it. We were not given even a rupee as taxi fare. Now it has become big business. Just the other day both Sandeep Patil and Mohinder Amarnath insisted on playing in a Test match in spite of being unfit, for they wanted their Rs 15,000." But he admits that the monetary stakes increase the pressures on the batsman though Gavaskar would not agree.

In fact Gavaskar still defends his pro-Packer stance in what he says was the most controversial period of his career. "I was inclined to join Packer because I wanted to play with the world's best. And he had promised that he would release us whenever we

were needed for the Tests. And the he maligned me for that. The argument how could we be selected if we did not domestic matches. How many domestic matches have I played, anyway? And did any protest when Vijay Amritraj and Prasad Padukone began to play abroad as professionals?" he asks with indignation. Says Manohar: "All this weakness against bowling would have gone if the Indian cricketers were allowed to play with Packer."

Controversial Image: His trust in Packer was not the only time when Gavaskar found himself at the centre of controversy. He began in right earnest with his autobiography *Sunny Days*, published in 1976 when he made forthright, if sometimes rude, comments on people, umpires, officials and even places. If his saying that wasn't impressed by Lord's upset the British, the Jamaicans were outraged by his calling them savages who were "in blood every time a West Indies bowler came in to bowl. He was accused of having deliberately tried to harm Venkataraghavan's chances as a batsman by playing that innings of 36 not out in 60 overs while chasing England's 338 in the first Prudential Cup Test at Lord's in 1975, and the Cricket Council Board sought his explanation for it in the batting. Says Gavaskar: "It was an incredible double-century and I wish I had been given the chance to forget it," and indignantly denies the suggestion that it was deliberate. "The crowd, clanging beer cans, such a din. I got into some kind of mental block. Even when I tried to clear the air and get out I was dropped. I don't know how it happened," he says.

Most controversial was his walkout at Melbourne, upset by an umpiring decision and abusive language from Dennis Lillee. "That was silly of me," he admits now. Once again he was accused of getting Mohinder Amarnath axed from the side that toured England in 1982, and including Bombay teammates Suru Nayak and Ghulam against form. Counters Gavaskar: "They did not do well. But neither did Gursharan Singh and Ashok Malhotra on the last tour to West Indies. They were in the north. Did someone accuse Kapil having been parochial?" Gavaskar believes that he has always got the rough end of the stick from a section of the press. Says "After my century in Delhi, someone wrote that I survived a confident appeal at 63. I was hit on the back foot off Holding. It was to myself, doesn't this guy know. I was on the front foot? Maybe that's why he is in the press-box while I am in the middle. There is no denying that all Bombay cricketers look to him for help and guidance."

And the... argument... we did not... domestic... And did... Raj and Pra... had as profes... ion. Says... ss against... the Indian... with Packe... His trust... when Gav... controversy... h his aut... d in 1976... times rude... es, official... saying tha... ord's upset... ere outraged... s who wan... est Indies... He was w... erately tri... chances as... gs of 36 no... England's 3... al Cup too... Cricket Cou... ion for it... was an in... double-century.

Difficult Phase: The controversies only snowballed as he was appointed captain in the 1978-79 series against West Indies following the exit of Bedi in the wake of the disaster in Pakistan. Gavaskar had in fact celebrated his first appearance as captain with a victory in the Auckland tour of New Zealand while Bedi was in the team. But now, against a depleted West Indies team, he somehow failed to marshal decidedly better resources into securing a more authentic win. Though he collected 732 runs from the series his captaincy showed a lack of killer instinct and India won only one of the six Tests. Alvin Kallicharan's West Indies managed to draw the rest.

True, this was the phase after the great quartet had faded out but Dilip Doshi and Kapil did not bowl badly. In fact from his own slow approach to batting it seemed the Indian captain wanted to play safe and hang on to his 1-0 lead. But he was not a self-record-hungry captain as was evident in declaring the innings at Calcutta while he was batting fluidly at 182, on the threshold of an international double-century.

The defensive approach was yet again clearly visible in the third Test against the West Indies at Bangalore in 1981 when he took 11 hours 42 minutes to score 172, an Indian record for the longest innings and one that he would perhaps like to forget. It was his pensive, reticent nature that did not allow him to become an attacking, high-profile batsman like Ian Chappell or Tony Greig though he did flatter to deceive when, in the first Test series against Pakistan, he succeeded in getting his boys motivated enough to inflict a remarkable 2-0 defeat on an opposition which, on paper, had better batting and bowling.

Mellowed Man: Even when he took the tour to Australia later, he gave the indication of developing into an attacking captain in his first meet-the-press after arriving in Australia as he declared: "I have told the boys to play as if they were playing against Pakistan." But it was his persistent failure with the West Indies in that series which left him a much mellowed man. Gavaskar seemed to disintegrate to some degree in the return series in Pakistan after this year as he struggled with form and saw, to his amazement, Indian batting collapse again and again on perfect batting tours. The losses made him even more of a shadow and as a former team-mate remarked: "He had very little to offer the boys off the field." Even Ajit Wadekar says: "He was a

defensive captain though you can understand that because he commanded limited resources. But he was also sometimes difficult to understand. For example, he gave Dhiraj Parsana just two overs against England in Delhi."

His strongest defence comes from his father who says Sunil isn't such a loner. "He began organising the Sunday club on tours," he says. Gavaskar explains that the Sunday club was an institution meant to provide a light interlude to team-mates on a difficult tour. Said he: "They all came to the club, dressed in weird costumes decided for the week and enjoyed themselves in an informal atmosphere. But we gave it up on the Pakistan tour as we found that some of the blokes

any better? It was a great injustice."

Loss of captaincy suddenly meant the loss of all power and even little privileges that matter—like an independent hotel room on tour. In case of Gavaskar it also meant loss of form and it was through sheer determination that he overcame the shock to retain his place as the country's topmost opening batsman. Today, he puts it more philosophically: "That's the game. A particular approach succeeds, they pat you on the back. You fail, they kick you in the backside."

While his stodginess and reticence have origins in his humble, middle class upbringing and in his persistent fight to make it to the top all on his own, his patronising attitude towards the Bombay cricketers comes from the fascinating fact that almost all of them come from the Dadar-Shivaji Park area and have played together as little children: Gavaskar, Vengsarkar, Sandeep Patil, Wadekar, Subhash Gupte, Balu Gupte, Madhav Mantri, Sudhir Naik, Sharad Hazare and Milind Rege—the list would read like a who's who of Bombay cricket. And almost each of them learnt the game in these humble surroundings, graduating through the Bombay schoolboys' Giles and Harris Shield, the club's Kanga League and finally to the Ranji Trophy via the Indian Schoolboys' team and Vizzy and Rohinton Baria trophies for the universities where Gavaskar rewrote practically all batting records.

Childhood Obsession: Gavaskar today nostalgically shows visitors the narrow courtyard in front of the old flat where he was born on July 10, 1949 and where he played with a tennis ball for the first few years. "There are buildings on both sides and the only way you could get runs was by driving straight. And if you hit a window-pane you were given out. Now you know why my straight-drive is so good and why I lift the ball so rarely," he says with a twinkle in his eyes. Recalls childhood pal and cricket companion Subhash Ambie: "He would never get out. So we appealed even when the ball hit his arm and declared him out by majority verdict so that the others could also bat."

Under the watchful eye of his parents—his father played club cricket and his mother captained the locality's women's cricket team—and his uncle Madhav Mantri who had kept wickets for India in one Test, he graduated to Shivaji Park. Recalls father Manohar: "We sent him to Xavier's for both schooling and college education. They had always had the best cricket teams." At 19, he made his mark in university cricket, and later his way to the Bombay Ranji team. It took him just four matches in first-class cricket to impress the selectors enough to include him in the team touring the Caribbean in 1971.

These humble beginnings also made

For all the great class and skill of the Don he never had to face such sustained pace bowling as Sunny has experienced in modern times. For me he stands out among contemporary opening batsmen for his durability, composure and high technical performance at a time when all Test cricketers face tremendous pressure.

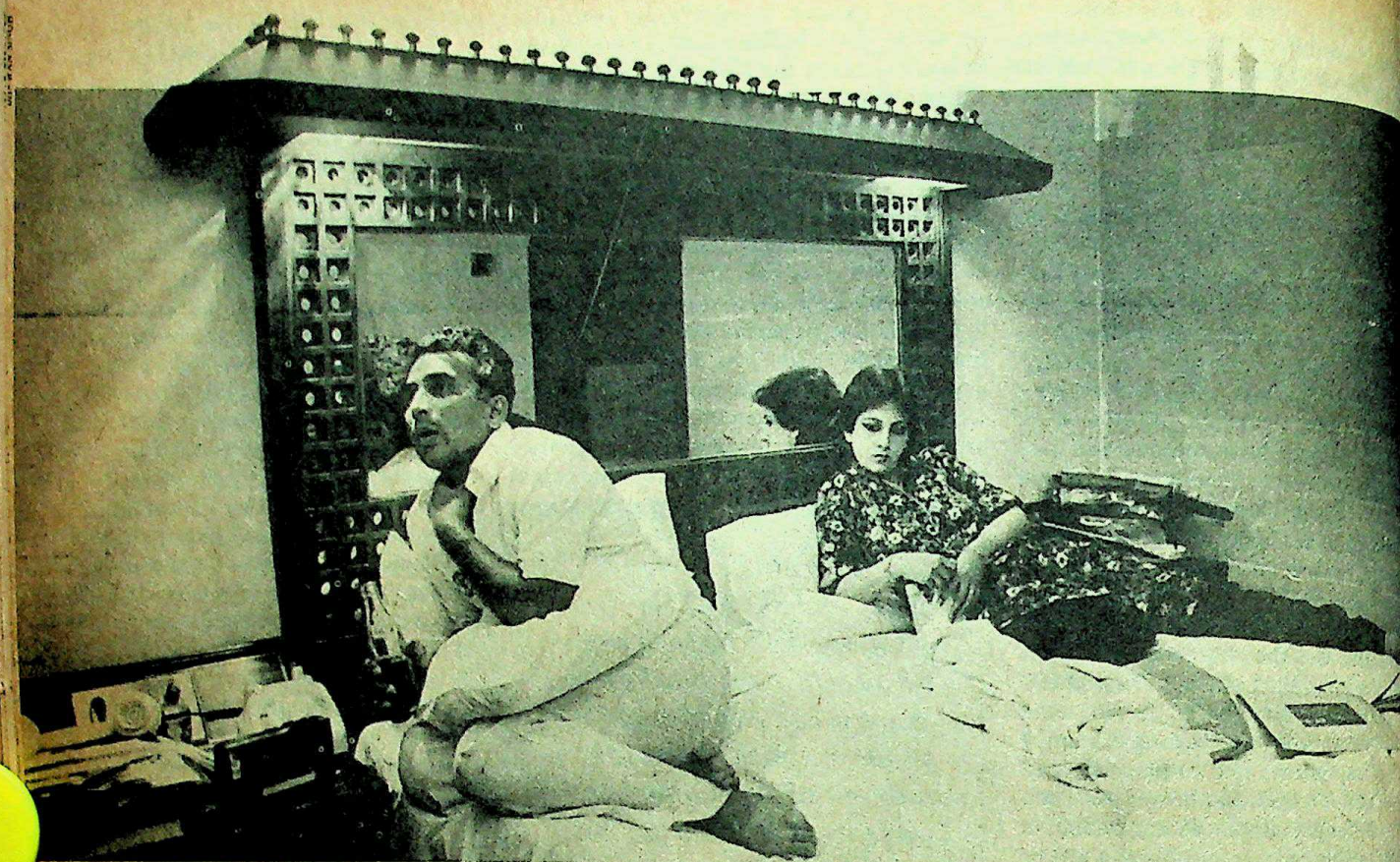
—IAN BOTHAM

He is the best opening batsman I have ever seen. He has perfect technique and balance and if you bowl him a half-volley he almost always hits it for four.

—MIKE BREARLEY

who had become senior did not enjoy it any more."

GAVASKAR'S detractors admit that there is hardly a shrewder judge of the game than him in India. Says Bedi: "He has such concentration, such single-minded devotion. So wrapped up is he that I think he would have made a magnificent golfer." He is also ambitious, enjoys power and that is why the most disappointing phase of his life was when he was replaced as captain by Kapil Dev after the disastrous series against Pakistan earlier this year. While he would himself not comment on it his father would pull no punches and says: "How did he fail when he averaged nearly 50? How was Kapil's performance



The Little Master relaxes with wife Marshneil in his hotel room after a hard day's batting

him a loner to a degree. He has often been accused of retiring with his books at the end of a game rather than spend time with teammates even when he was captain. His persistent fights with the selectors, board officials and the press have cemented the impression of his being short-tempered and stodgy. But Bishan Bedi recalls that all great batsmen have been loners and that includes Bradman, Barry Richards and Boycott. Says he: "Only we bowlers enjoy ourselves perhaps because it is a batsmen's game."

Introverted Nature: At home Gavaskar is a retiring person and spends most of his time with his parents, wife Marshneil and son Rohan who plays cricket left-handed like Rohan Kanhai after whom he has been named. Says Marshneil: "It's amazing because he writes and plays all other games right-handed." His own finances are managed by his father. Says Gavaskar with a mischievous grin: "I don't know how much I own. Ask my father. I only own myself." His preoccupations like writing and business leave very little time for other interests though he reads thrillers and watches *dishum-dishum* movies on the video. Says he: "Give me a free evening and I'll watch Prakash play a game of badminton, anywhere." Gavaskar was a keen student and old Kavirites remember him as a serious type. Says alumnus and former college team-mate Rajiv Haksar: "He was a serious person. But

on the cricket field it was impossible to get him out though as a fielder he had butterfingers."

It is a combination of the triumphs and pains of his 13-year innings, that today works on the mind of the cricketing colossus. And it is this that often makes him inclined to call it a day, as he threatens to do now, at the end of this series. "I have played enough cricket," he says quite unhesitatingly and has even begun laying out plans for his retirement. Ideally he would like to open an indoor coaching centre with modern facilities like bowling machines and various kinds of wickets "if someone gave me the finances".

Continuing Dedication: Most of all, although he does not say so, he would like to do something that helps sportsmen in the country get more, in terms of money, respect and facilities: "I hope someone could suggest how to do it. Perhaps I, Prakash, Vijay (Amritraj), Mike Ferreira and others like us could join hands and do something." It is obvious that even after he hangs the bat, Gavaskar will continue to be in the midst of it all.

Yet there are few—and that includes his family—who believe that he will call it a day so soon. Says brother-in-law Viswanath, who holds the second highest aggregate (6,080) for any Indian batsman: "I think he will continue to play and become the world's

first to aggregate 10,000 runs in Test cricket. He's still got everything in him." Marshneil would like him to play till he is 40. Father Manohar would want him to go on only as long as he enjoys it. The shrewd appreciation of his retirement plans comes from Bedi. Says he: "Cricket is his life. He will not quit because I or someone else wants him to do so. He will take the decision after weighing all factors and convincing himself of it. He does realise that with all the pressure he has exhausted his natural resources. But I do not think he will quit so soon."

West Indies Captain Clive Lloyd, sprightly 39, says it will be a sorry thing if he were to leave now even though "as we get older training becomes harder and you can't say in the morning, hell, is it all necessary? Why should I slog?" In fact it is hard to tell anyone in Bombay—where taxi-drivers look at you scornfully if you try telling them Gavaskar's address—who would believe he will quit so soon.

And perhaps, with all the persuasion he will not, at least not as long as he is seen as being the country's number one opening batsman. A team-mate summed it up: "He wants to quit like Vijay Merchant; but people will ask 'why' and not 'why not'. Why should he quit when everyone will say 'why the hell?'"

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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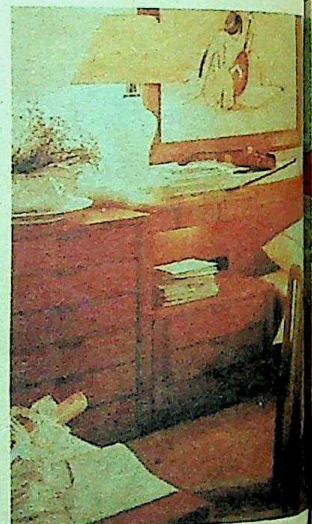
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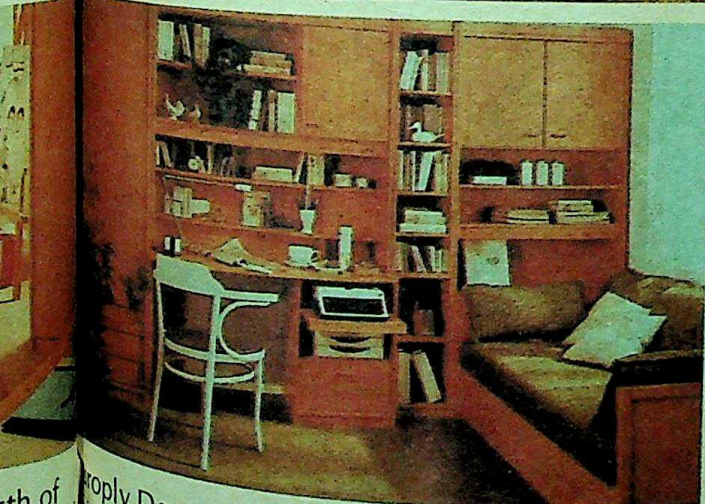
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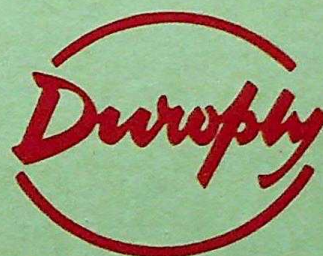
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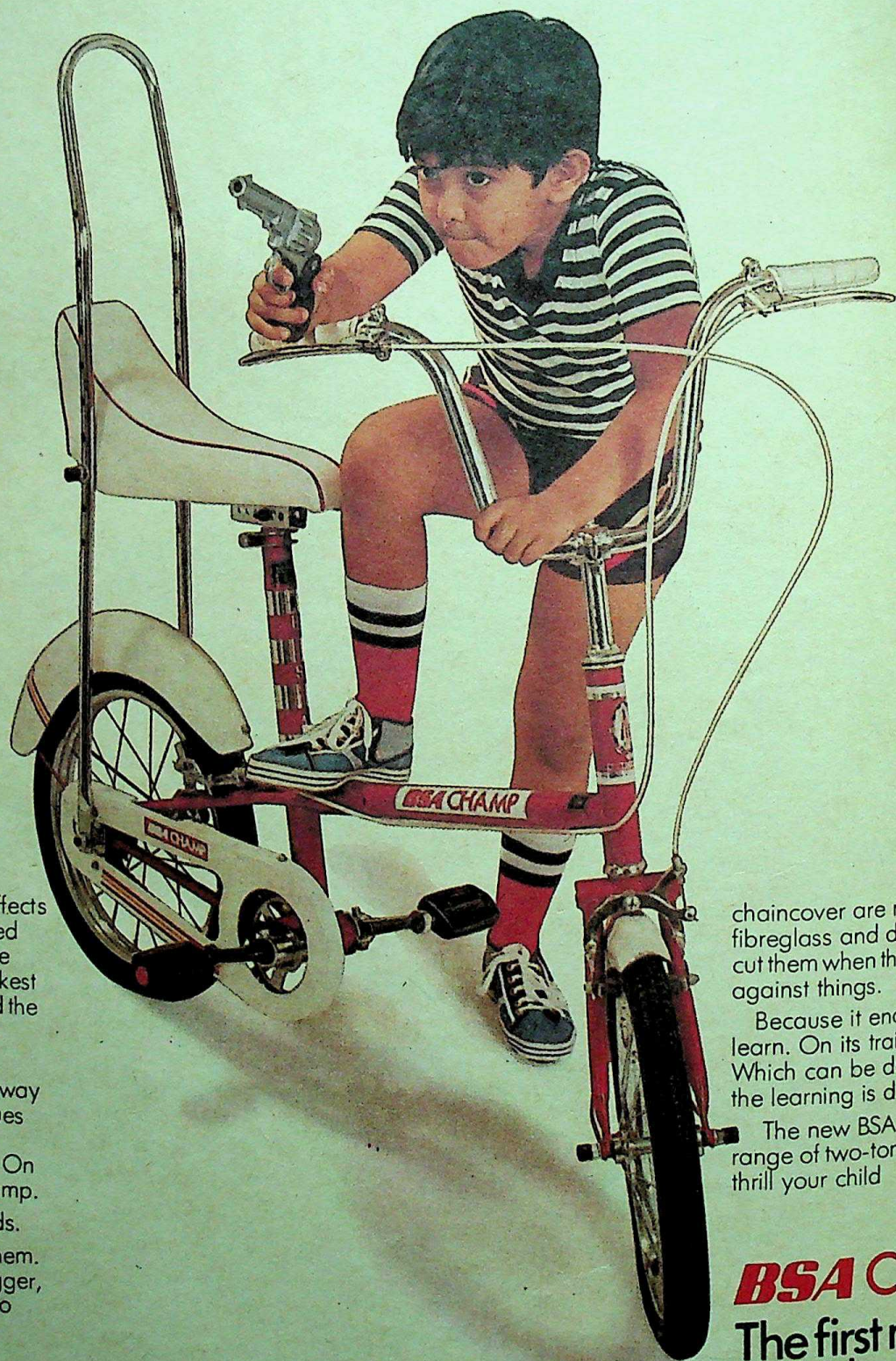
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SRI LANKA

Breakthrough At Last



MIRACLES seldom occur in diplomacy — particularly when it comes to problems

minorities. What Gopalaswami Parthasarathi achieved in Colombo last fortnight was not exactly a miracle, but it certainly was not something to be scoffed at. Talking of the proposals he handed over to the Indian prime minister's special envoy, said Sri Lanka President Junius Richard Jayewardene: "I hope that if these proposals are implemented, violent activity or support for it will wither away." Parthasarathi, who maintained a discreet and almost Buddhist-like silence throughout his visit to the troubled island, observed at the end of his delicate mission: "I think the outcome is positive. It is substantial."

The outcome referred to was the broad framework acceptable to the Sri Lanka government within which the Tamils will now have to make their demands. The framework was hammered out after hectic negotiations—five long rounds of talks in four days—between the Indian diplomat and the Sri Lankan president. The terse statement issued by the president's office said the two discussed proposals regarding amendment to the District Development Councils (DDC's) law

which the Indian peace-maker will place before leaders of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) "to enable them to arrive at an acceptable solution" to the problems the Tamil community in Sri Lanka faces.

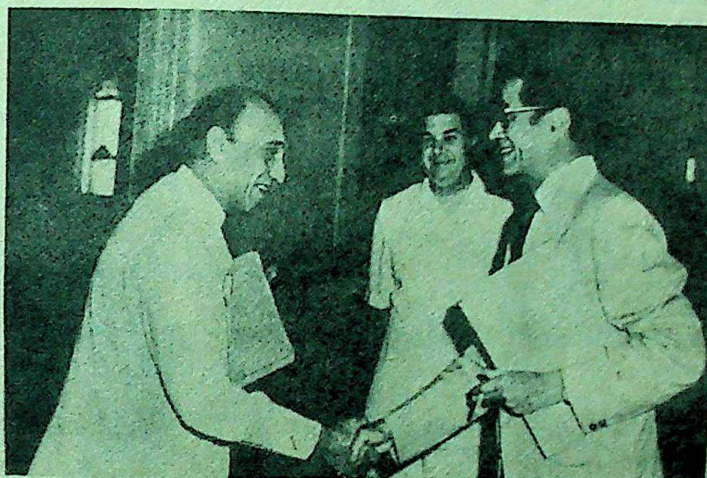
Colombo insists that the proposals Tamils may come up with must include: the giving up of the idea for a separate Eelam state, the merger of the DDC's within the province after acceptance by the councils' members and a referendum in the districts, and the recognition of the administration of Trincomalee as a Central Government function.

Discussions: Parthasarathi has invited TULF leaders to Delhi for a meeting this week. They include TULF President Sivachidambaram and General Secretary Appapillai Amirthalingam and R. Sampanthan, the MP from Trincomalee who lost his seat in Parliament during his other TULF colleagues, following their refusal to take oath, giving up the demand for a separate state. On hand to assist

will be S. Thondaman, leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress and minister for rural industrial development in Jayewardene's government.

The Tamil leaders are expected to prepare a set of their demands which Parthasarathi will present to the Sri Lanka president, who will arrive in the Indian capital on November 21, two days before the beginning of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Presumably, the proposals will be ready before the president meets Mrs Gandhi to discuss relations between the two countries as well as the Tamil problem.

It is not known if Jayewardene will meet TULF leaders in Delhi. However, INDIA TODAY



Jayewardene and Parthasarathi: positive outcome

learns from authoritative sources in Colombo that organising such a meeting will not be a problem, if found necessary. The Tamils' demands will be placed before an all-party conference in Sri Lanka. The consensus reached at the conference will then be discussed by the ruling United National Party's executive committee and possibly by the executive bodies of the other parties as well, before they are taken up by parliament for legislative action.

Suspicious: Relations between the Sinhalese and Tamils reached an all-time low following the bloody ethnic riots four months ago. The deadlock between the battered Tamils and the unrepentant Sinhalese was broken during Parthasarathi's first peace mission in late August following India's offer of good office to settle the dispute. But it was made immediately after the riots, and fears of India's motives were widely expressed in Sri Lanka. Jayewardene invited the Indian envoy to pay a second visit but later backed out. The excuse offered was

that he would be in Delhi for CHOGM anyway and would talk it over with Mrs Gandhi. However, after returning to Colombo after an extensive visit to India last month, Thondaman, the Tamil leader, persuaded Jayewardene to let the veteran Indian diplomat pick up the threads from where he left off the last time.

The mood in Colombo has mellowed a little this time. Said an Indian observer who was in Colombo during Parthasarathi's two visits: "I could not believe what I witnessed during the first visit. It looked as though the Sinhalese are a race without a conscience. They did not seem to suffer any pangs of guilt about what they did to the Tamils. It was slightly different this time. They seem to have realised that what happened to the Tamils was quite bad."

Workable Solution: Hard realities too have played their own role. Sri Lanka's exports have fallen sharply since July. Tourism, a major foreign exchange-earner, has suffered badly. International aid-givers are hesitating to come forward with generous grants. Said a south Asian diplomat in Colombo: "The Sri Lankans have realised that unless they solve the Tamil problem soon, their economy will continue to be in a mess."

The proposals the Indian envoy brought back have been received with mixed reaction. Moderate TULF leaders are cautious. Says Sivachidambaram: "A number of matters need clarification. It is not possible to say anything just now." Amirthalingam who is now on an extensive tour of Europe and East Africa, was not available for comment. Thondaman said in a telephonic interview from his office in Colombo: "We all must work together and thrash out a workable solution to the problem."

While the extremists are unlikely to give up the demand for a separate state M.K. Eelaventhana, secretary of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front, said the Colombo offer was neither federalism nor regional autonomy. In any case, it was "too late and too little," he complained. Eelaventhana warned the TULF leaders against committing a political blunder by accepting the offer. His views are obviously backed by many other Tamils who have been alienated by this year's rioting.

Jayewardene realises that if the Tamil problem is not solved in his lifetime, there is every possibility that it may get worse. What happens in Delhi this fortnight may have far-reaching implications for peace in South Asia.

—S. VENKAT NARAYAN

TALLOW

Cooking Up An Issue

"Our policy is very clear. We never allowed the import of beef tallow, nor will we allow it in future."

—Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in Ajmer, on November 3

"The commerce minister must assure us that the stocks of tallow will be seized and destroyed, otherwise millions of puris and chapatis will continue to be eaten by people not knowing that it is beef tallow."

—Karan Singh, MP, in the Lok Sabha, September 3

"We will fight the elections on the issue of beef tallow."

—Resolution of the National Democratic Alliance, October 26



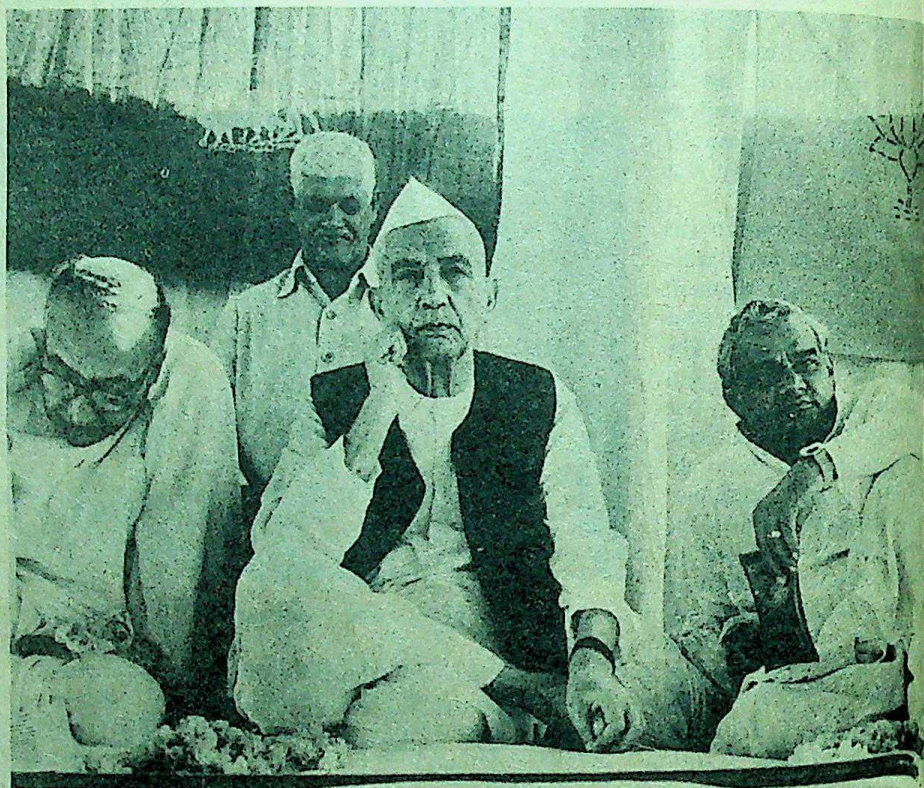
IT WAS the proverbial fat that found itself in the fire, and all because of lies, ignorance and political contrivance—and a few unscrupulous traders. Last fortnight, as the winter session of Parliament drew near, the Opposition was girding its loins, bracing for an almighty battle with the ruling Congress(I) on the unholy issue of the pollution of vanaspati with so called beef tallow. Not that anyone had found anything new to say on the subject. Ever since the discovery of stray cases of adulterated vanaspati some four months ago, the tallow controversy has simmered inside Parliament and outside, with politicians from the treasury and opposition benches of Parliament trading vicious charges. But now it was evident that the temperature was rising because, as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) indicated at a dharna in the capital, the opposition parties seem to have concluded that elections are near and tallow is the handiest campaign issue they would have to strike at the ruling party.

In the rising clamour, there was a clear note of panic in the Hindu community at large. The Vanaspati Manufacturers Association (VMA) revealed that nation-wide consumption of vanaspati, normally about one million tonnes annually, had fallen off 30 per cent and that the association was asking its 91 members to contribute Rs 5 per tonne of their production for a massive image polishing effort. At roadside stalls in the Gangetic plain, restaurants and ramshackle eateries pulled down signs saying "Vanaspati used here", while temples across the face of northern India declined to accept sweets and

offerings of food prepared in vanaspati. Said Deen Bandhu Das, mahant of Ayodhya's Hanuman Garhi Temple: "We have asked all the shopkeepers to only cook milk or sugar products. The other prasads are not accepted at any cost."

Widespread Protests: Letters flowed into the office of Commerce Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh protesting the use of the tallow in any form. Wrote S.L. Sondhi, secretary of the Radha Soami Satsang based at Beas in Amritsar district: "To a vast major-

No matter that the provocation was merely two isolated incidents of vanaspati adulteration and three instances of tallow being stored in vanaspati tins. No matter that of about 4,000-odd test samples frequently taken all over the country, there wasn't a single case of adulteration detected. No matter that the Government last August banned the import of all animal tallow, religious sentiment was obviously hurt, and would take a tremendous effort to rectify things.



Charan Singh and Vajpayee on dharna: playing with fire

ity of the population this presence of animal fat in the articles of their use is most repugnant, and to others it is extremely damaging to their religious sentiments." In statements across the land the protest was loud and forceful. Said Swami Krishnananda, general secretary of the Divine Life Society Ashram in the hills above Rishikesh: "The adulteration of vanaspati has caused deep anguish in the minds of us all. Our ashram has decided to stop all purchases from the market of any item that is likely to contain fat of any kind." In Ayodhya's Kanak Bhawan Temple, said priest Hardas Deolia: "Those who have done this have done an irreparable loss to humanity and religion. No government, working for the people, should spare them."

But one group which was certainly contributing to such an effort were the politicians. And in the din of histrionics the casualty was truth. Babu Jagjivan Ram, in 1967 had the courage to tell Parliament that among Hindus it wasn't only the Muslims that ate beef, decided to choose a different rut—from where Mangal Pandey launched his protest against the British in 1857 using beef and pork grease to lubricate their bridges—to attack the Government. Harbansingh Nandan Bahuguna alleged that beef tallow being used in the making of cheese. Said Dal Secretary Rameshwar Singh, who wrote off 10,000 letters and 50,000 pamphlets to organisations, institutions and groups throughout the country: "Five cases of adul-

VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH

"I shall not hide anything"

FOR Union Commerce Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, 51, the raging beef tallow controversy has become a prestige issue. On his administrative and political acumen, depends the credibility of the Congress(I) Government. A man of principle, Singh survived many political controversies during his eventful tenure as Uttar Pradesh's chief minister from June 1980 to July 1982. Singh created political history when he tendered his resignation from the chief ministership after holding himself morally responsible for the massacre of Harijans in Kanpur. Seven months later Mrs Gandhi rehabilitated Singh at the Centre due to his unflinching loyalty to her and his clean image. Singh spoke to Principal Correspondent PRABHU CHAWLA on various questions relating to the beef tallow muddle. Excerpts:

Q. Are you convinced that some unscrupulous traders misused the import policy to import beef tallow?

A. Yes, some unscrupulous persons blinded by their greed have stooped to levels none of us could even imagine. It is a case of a wrongly framed policy, wrongly used by wrong persons.

Q. Why have the political parties including your party over-reacted to an issue which is primarily a commercial one?

A. To the Opposition every vanaspati tin appears to be a ballot-box. In fact they are opening the Pandora's box of their own policy lapses.

Q. Don't you agree that by making such a furore, political parties including the Congress(I) have whipped up the religious sentiments of the people?

A. It is they who have declared it to be an election issue. They little realise what mental agony their furore causes to the people. But they perhaps see in the mental agony of people a political investment for their future. So they are doing their best to augment this agony.

Q. You have stated that beef tallow could be imported only because it was put on OGL by the Janata regime. How come that the beef tallow was imported between 1970-75 in this country?

A. The import-export policies of 1970-75 did not allow for the import of beef tallow. However, if any person has violated government policy, he will not be spared. I am having the records scrutinised and I shall not hide anything from the people and the Parliament.

Q. Whom do you blame for the present controversy—the Opposition, the

bureaucrats, the industry or the ruling party?

A. We took firm and positive action. We banned the imports of all animal tallow, made arrests, conducted raids, seized papers, handed over the cases to CBI, put errant firms in abeyance, froze imported stocks of imported tallow and have ordered its re-exports. The Bhatinda man is still behind bars along with two of his colleagues. The Opposition, instead of joining hands with the Government in these positive actions, has chosen to attack the Government itself.



V.P. Singh: firm stand

Q. How are you going to defuse the situation which seems to be getting out of hand day by day? Will you take some drastic action against the officials including those in the STC and the Commerce Ministry and the traders who have created panic in the country?

A. You should address this question to those who have a hand and an interest in confusing the situation. The steps which I have just mentioned are the right steps towards defusing the situation.

Q. How are you going to solve the problems of supplying vital raw material to the soap industry?

A. We have already started the exercise in our ministry in consultation

with DGTD. However, there is a silver lining to this ban. It can give a fillip to minor oil production like rice-bran oil, mahua, neem, sal and karanja etc. Benefits will go to the villages.

Q. But don't you feel that the import and adulteration are two completely different issues and they should not have been mixed?

A. Certainly, I agree with you. Few isolated incidents of adulteration have been blown up. Import of any commodity has nothing to do with unfair trade practices, which have to be curbed in their own right.

Q. By putting an absolute ban on the import of tallow, the Commerce Ministry have caused lot of problems for the unorganised small-scale sector and the soap industry. Is it not a hasty step?

A. I have already mentioned we are taking care of it. The religious sentiments of people are to be respected. If people do not want tallow in soap, we cannot allow it surreptitiously. Soap prices may go up, but people's feelings cannot be compromised at any price.

Q. If STC has been importing tallow which is of the same quality as imported by the traders, then what was wrong with them? Do you feel that STC never imported beef tallow?

A. A few traders misused the import licences which were issued to them under the liberalised policy initiated by the Janata government. I admit it continued for some time during our tenure also, but as soon as we came to know of its misuse, we acted and tightened the policy. It is the misuse that has to be checked. As far as STC is concerned, I have been informed that it had never contracted for beef tallow.

Q. But there is nothing like mutton tallow in the world market. The product is marketed by quality such as extra fancy, top white, bleachable white etc.

A. Well, products have various commercial brand names, but if there is mutton, there has to be mutton tallow. However, we are examining papers as to who imported beef tallow and to what use they have put it. We will take the sternest action.

Q. Don't you agree that the present controversy is the direct outcome of the licence raj or system of canalisation which makes it impossible for genuine industrialists to get timely supply of raw materials at competitive prices?

A. Canalisation of certain items of imports and exports has helped us in our trade in marshalling our unified bargaining strength. However, when it does not serve its purpose, we decanalise also.

teration are enough evidence to prove our point. What has happened to the lakhs of tonnes of beef tallow lying in various godowns? What is the surety that it will not be used in future?"

Initial Arrests: Obviously, men like Singh were basing their opinion with an utter disregard for the facts. The tallow issue, blown out of all proportion, started in July when the Punjab police seized tins of tallow from the premises of the Bhatinda Chemicals and Vanaspati Works in Bhatinda, Punjab, and arrested proprietor D.D. Mittal under the National Security Act (NSA) along with Vinod Kumar Jain, a politically well connected managing director of Jain Shudh Vanaspati Pvt Ltd, to whom the tallow was ultimately traced (INDIA TODAY, October 15). A week after the Bhatinda seizure the Bihar police claim to have unearthed 283 tonnes of tallow and 300 tonnes of vanaspati from a truck at the premises of Chotanagpur Engineering Works owned by Anil Modi.

What exacerbated the impact of these seizures was the fact that tallow was discovered on the premises of a company purportedly manufacturing vanaspati and imported by the owner of another vanaspati concern. In fact, Mittal had no licence for the manufacture of vanaspati and does not make it.

The debate heated up when Parliament assembled for its monsoon session in August, and the slanging matches started. The Congress(I) turned the tables on the Opposition by pointing out that the seeds of the present controversy were laid during the Janata interregnum when, to simplify import procedures, certain changes were made in the import policy which made it possible for private parties to bring in tallow (see interview). Retorted Mohan Dharia, who was Janata commerce minister at the time: "The present government cannot absolve itself (of blame). Why are vanaspati manufacturers allowed to import beef tallow when it cannot be used in vanaspati? What is happening to its follow up action and monitoring?" Added Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) General Secretary, Lal Krishna Advani: "The issue at stake is not the import of beef tallow but its adulteration with vegetable oils and its misuse for profiteering. We suspect that corruption is the main reason for it, and only a thorough probe can prove whether it was done due to political or administrative corruption."

The Opposition is, indeed, likely to ask for a probe into the affair once the debate gets going in Parliament. But that could merely deflect from the gut of the problem, that tallow has moved centre-stage in politics only because the politicians have pushed it there. Said the *Indian Express* editorially: "The slowly but surely snowballing agitation over the beef tallow controversy is a classic example of an issue being deliberately blown

out of both context and proportion for purely political ends." Added VMA President H.V. Mariwala: "It is a typical example of over-reaction on the part of political parties. Because of the highly surcharged propaganda, the religious sentiments of the people have been hurt."

THE POLITICIANS are guilty of more than mere over-reaction. The entire debate has been characterised largely by ignorance or a deliberate refusal to look the facts in their face. Tallow has been

"The slowly but surely snowballing agitation over the beef tallow controversy is an example of an issue being deliberately blown out of both context and proportion for purely political ends."

—Indian Express



Those found to have profited from tallow are likely to be dealt with exemplary firmness, if only to placate aroused passions.

CHEMISTRY

Fat Use

TALLOW, the stuff that refuses to melt even in the glare of the orthodox public eye, does not normally command such interest. A waxy, white substance, known to biochemists as a hard fat, comes from animals like cows, sheep, horses, pigs and even dogs and kangaroos. Obtained from slaughter houses—the United States and Australia being the world's largest producers—it is used almost exclusively as an industrial raw material in the manufacture of soaps and greases, though some goes into animal feed.

Although tallow is extracted from identifiable animals—and can in its pure form be referred to as beef or mutton tallow—it is traded internationally by

used in soap-making in India since when the growing shortage of edible oils obliged the Government to ask the States for assistance under Public Law 480, which allowed for local currency payment for agricultural commodities. The 1971 over Bangladesh put an end to that and the important of tallow was canalised through the State Trading Corporation (STC). It was at this point that the ingenuity of the bureaucratic mind took over and laid the ground for the disaster that has followed. For reasons that aren't clear—and ever since tallow has been in the headlines, the STC has shut its doors tight—the canalisation refers to "mutton tallow" even though no such commodity is traded internationally (see box) and what was being imported was clearly a mixture of various animal fats, including beef.

In one curious incident, the STC, when a private party imported tallow, the former "mutton" tallow and the latter "beef" tallow from the same supplier. The two ships arrived in the same vessel last September and the STC re-exported its share when customs asked them how to differentiate between the two commodities. In fact, in recent contracts, the STC has imported 50,000 tonnes of mutton tallow at a lower price than it paid for beef tallow. Jayant Oil Mills imported 5,800 tonnes of mutton tallow from the US last July at Rs 5,800 per tonne when the STC bought 5,800 tonnes of mutton tallow from an American supplier in the same month at about Rs 4,000 per tonne. But industry sources affirm that pure mutton tallow, if it were obtained, would be costlier than pure beef tallow.

The STC's ruse may have served to placate religious sentiment but it hasn't helped the day's problem. The twists and turns of import policy tell their own story:

quality rather than animal of origin. A small proportion of the tallow is kept in edible form—such as lard for cooking—but most of it is rendered inedible with the introduction of chemicals and is mixed in different proportions to produce grades which go by names such as 'top white', 'good mixed', 'bleachable fancy' down to 'low grade' tallow. Again, these are determined not by the source of the tallow but by such indicators as melting point, colour and hardness. It has a characteristic meaty smell and in ordinary circumstances is easily distinguishable from vanaspati, made by adding hydrogen to vegetable oils, which has a somewhat different consistency and smell.

Exaggerated Issue: To make soap the tallow is treated with caustic soda and broken down into glycerol and fatty acids. Both are essential industrial products.

Back in the wan days of 1975 and the emergency, the Congress(I) regime tried some brazen arm-twisting to get producers to reduce prices. The soap industry retorted that it could only do so if it had access to cheaper raw materials. Since tallow at the time was selling for less than vegetable oils, import was opened to certain private parties.

Came the Janata regime, and in a bold move slashed import controls on any item that wasn't specifically listed in a banned, restricted or canalised list. Since new regulations are usually old ones dusted off, the item that found itself on the canalised list was none other than mutton tallow.

At this point, the ingenuity of the Indian trader took over. Noting that mutton tallow was on the canalised list, tallow by any other name would qualify for private import. And it was, that the term "beef tallow" came to the Indian traders lexicon.

The motives of the private importer weren't hard to pin-point. The STC kept reporting what it persisted in calling mutton tallow for the cottage soap making sector in fact, in annual production 8 lakh tonnes, tallow imports (about 50,000 tonnes) private traders began to than private service the organised soap-making sector. Mills in current production about 3.5 lakh tonnes, last July tallow needs about 50,000 tonnes). Soap bought producers switched from palm stearine to an American tallow because of price advantages, particularly after March 1981 when the import duty on palm stearine was suddenly hiked to 150 per cent from 80 per cent.

Cheaper Option: Says Tata Oil Mills Company Ltd President V.K. Bali: "During the period in which it (tallow) was imported there was a definite price advantage in using it." Added Adi Godrej, director of

Godrej Soaps Ltd: "The economics of tallow use have varied from time to time. By and large it has been less expensive than other oils and fats."

Since tallow was available internationally at a landed cost of Rs 6,000 to Rs 8,000 per tonne against more than Rs 10,000 per tonne for other fats between January 1980 and June 1981, orders went out for some 1 lakh tonnes. Then, just as suddenly as the boom in tallow imports began, it ended. On June 5, 1981, beef tallow joined mutton tallow on the canalised list. But not before,

A signboard in a shop: exaggerated reaction



The ban on the import to tallow will undoubtedly hit the soap making industry which requires some 4.5 lakh tonnes of fats to produce 11.5 lakh tonnes of soap each year.

But it will hurt the more vulnerable cottage sector more than the organised industry which has made headway in substituting the imported raw materials by using non-traditional oils and fats which are obtained from rice bran or certain trees.

The gap at present is about 1 lakh tonnes, met from STC tallow imports (about 50,000 tonnes) and private importers (50,000 tonnes on average). The government last fortnight placed palm stearine on the list of canalised imports and will buy it to replace tallow. While soap production will probably not be dislocated, the consumer is likely to end up paying more.

according to the Commerce Ministry, traders had cleared some Rs 80 crore in profit.

The story would have ended there had it not been for the continuing ingenuity of the importers and the evident ease with which regulations were bent. The alleged misuse of licenses and the resultant import of tallow has given a handle to those who would beat the Government with this particular stick. Since the adulteration scandal, Commerce Minister V.P. Singh and his staff have burned midnight oil scanning some 10,000 files and papers to see who has bent or broken import regulations after the canalisation of tallow in June 1981. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has on its plate some 200 complaints, and authorities have tentatively concluded that most parties holding the required licenses (additional licenses and registered exporters permits) imported the tallow for themselves but sold their licenses to others. Also, very few soap makers imported tallow but bought their requirements from importers who failed to keep proper records of what they had done with the tallow.

Acting on the assumption that there has been large scale misuse of licenses, the CBI has conducted some 100 raids in a dozen cities and formal complaints have been lodged for unauthorised import of tallow against General Foods of Indore, Jain Shudh Vanaspati of Delhi, and Hamilton Industries, Nangla Brothers, Sun Export Corporation and Impex International Corporation, all of Bombay.

At the same time, Singh has ordered the CBI to investigate how some 350 import licenses issued to 150 export houses were used to import tallow after the canalisation order. Commerce Ministry sources say that of this, about 160 licenses had expired before the canalisation but their validity was extended enabling them to place orders for tallow. Till the inquiry is complete, the ministry has secretly ordered that these 150 export houses should not be issued fresh import licenses of any kind for the next six months. Among them are soap makers, diamond exporters, wool makers, oil mills and other concerns which have nothing to do with tallow.

When the inquiries are done, those found to have profiteered in tallow are likely to be dealt with exemplary firmness, if only to placate aroused passions. But their crime will have been the misuse of import licenses and not of hurting religious sentiment, which is what the adulterators of vanaspati are guilty of. No one will doubt that they should be penalised, but looking for scapegoats is hardly the proper solution to the tallow controversy. And if the politicians persist in seeing tallow in every vanaspati tin and a vote in every kitchen, then they will have taken India one step closer to the brink.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

HINDUISM

Road To Revival

ON THE road from Gorakhpur that goes across the Nepal terai to Kathmandu, dark Harijan women lined up with fair and fat Thakur wives to worship not any deity but an eight-foot-high brass vessel mounted atop a truck and containing 400 litres of water. The water was drawn from Gangotri, the Himalayan cradle of the Ganga; the plywood canopy, looking rather theatrical against the backdrop of the dusty and barren fields in winter, depicted a goddess astride a lion. No, she is no familiar goddess. She is *Bharatmata* or Mother India, admitted last fortnight into the Hindu pantheon of 33 crore divinities and currently trundling her way from the famed Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu to Rameswaram, the temple town on the Bay of Bengal in distant Tamil Nadu.

The Kathmandu-Rameswaram trail is only one of the three main yatras (marches) and 89 upayatras (shorter marches) that will criss-cross the country this fortnight, traversing three lakh of India's five villages, covering well over 50,000 miles, and literally putting on wheels the concept of Hindu solidarity. Called *Ekatmata Yagna*—or, the integration rite—it was born out of a rare consensus hammered out in May among leaders of 85 main sects of India's nearly 55 crore Hindus. It is organised by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which claims a membership of 350,000, and says the march is necessary for national integration because, "India cannot be kept united without uniting the Hindus".

Country-wide Campaign: The two other main yatras are one from Gangasagar in coastal West Bengal to the Somnath temple in Gujarat, and another from Haridwar, the pilgrim town in the Himalayan foothills, to Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of India where three oceans meet. The trucks will stop by at 1,800 resting places. Last fortnight, they had already stopped at 400 such places, allowing for rousing religious speeches which often bordered dangerously on the political. Worship of the *kalas*, or the water-filled vessel; and distribution of water in 50-cc plastic bottles (against a minimum donation of Rs 10 apiece) from another *kalas*, carried atop a smaller truck, and containing water from all the main rivers of the north. The contents of the second *kalas* are constantly replenished by water offered by the locals in earthenware pitchers.

The curious hydraulics is accompanied by the taped hymn of the *yagna*, whose refrain is: *Hara Hara Gange*. The song, sung with more gusto than melodiousness, is only

punctuated by speeches from the VHP leaders, mostly bearded monks in saffron but possessing unexpected gift of the gab.

The speakers had one central theme: Hinduism is in danger. They ranted against "politicians" who, they said, had "pampered" the Muslims because the Muslims were their vote-banks. "If Pakistan can declare polygamy illegal", thundered Swami Abhedyananda, chief priest of the ancient and gorgeous Gorakhnath Temple, "why cannot we do that here?"

Passing through Lunglei, in predominantly Christian Mizoram, one upayatra stopped at market squares in the shadow of the churches: the VHP speakers lambasted the Christian missionaries and enthralled their audiences of *vais*, or Hindu plainspeople. Another upayatra started from Imphal in Manipur; yet another from the holy shrine of Pashupatikund at Teju in the easternmost point of the Arunachal Pradesh. The upayatra from Leh to Ludhiana, through the picturesque valleys and mountain ranges, was interrupted by a roadblock in Ladakh: the *kalas* had to be flown to Srinagar from where the march was resumed.

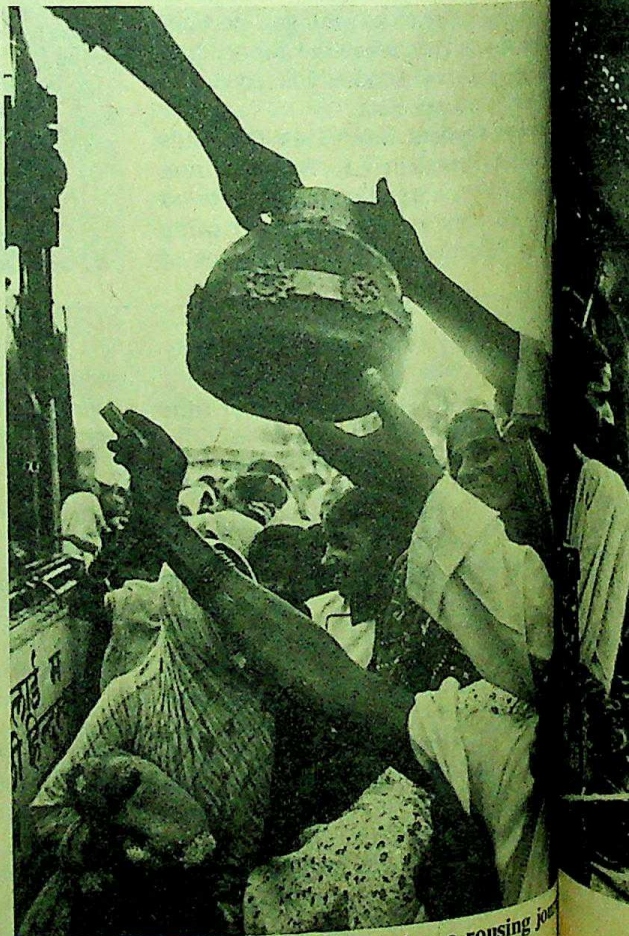
Common Patterns: The religious caravans often passed through sensitive areas. In Punjab itself, seeing with communal tension, one stopped at 16 places and gathered an unexpectedly large crowd at Golbagh in Amritsar, not far from the Golden Temple, the bastion of Sikh militants. When another upayatra arrived at Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh, there was a 22-hour curfew in force following Hindu-Muslim clashes two days earlier. The caravan was permitted to stop and leave only during the two hours' gap: even then, a huge crowd greeted it and lustily cheered the VHP speakers.

A caravan moved through the troubled-torn Mangoldoi district of Assam, the scene of the Nellie massacre early this year. It meandered through the Hindu ghetto of Srinagar's Habba Kadal, and moved across the Banihal tunnel to Doda and Udhama-

pur where the road often divided Hindu and Muslim villages, their inhabitants each other with suspicion and distrust. The caravan from Mansarovar passed through the maze of lanes in Moradabad, where communal tension smoulders on. The organisers say they witnessed a pattern: the more aware that the communal feelings, the larger the gathering.

The Congress(I) presented an excellent attitude towards the VHP show. It was silent when the plan was announced in the middle of October. P.C. Sethi, the home minister, even asked the state governments to provide security escorts to the vans. But, a fortnight later, Kamalapati, the Congress(I) working president, who is himself a devout Hindu, issued a distinguished patron of the famous Varanasi Kashi Devi temple in Uttar Pradesh, a strongly-worded statement condemning the *Ekatmata Yagna* and the march. "The march has no religious purpose whatsoever. Its main objective seems to be to exploit religious sentiments of the people to further reactionary and communal political aspirations."

Strong Statement: The statement was backed up by weighty co-signatories Venkataraman, Union defence minister, N.D. Tiwari, Union industry



Devout Hindus reach for the *kalas*: a rousing journey

ided Hindu...
 Vasantdada Patil and Arjun Singh, chief
 ministers of Maharashtra and Madhy Pra-
 desh; and Shankar Dayal Sharma, former
 Congress(I) president. Without mincing
 words, the statement added: "Everybody is
 aware that the RSS (Rashtriya Swyamsevak
 Sangh) is the inspiration behind the yatra."

TRIPATHI could hardly be accused of
 exaggerating, because the soul of the
 VHP is indeed the RSS, though the
 VHP is window-dressed with a galaxy
 of distinguished men: Swami Chinmaya-
 Sethi, the scholar, who founded the VHP in
 1964; Maharana Bhagawat Singh Mewar;
 S.K. Somaiya, the Bombay sugar-and-liquor
 tycoon; and G.H. Singhania, the Kanpur
 industrialist. The kingpins are, however, all
 from the RSS. Balasaheb Deoras, the RSS sar-
 vanga-chalak (supremo) is a life-member of
 the board of trust; so are Lala Hans Raj
 Gupta, Delhi unit chief of the RSS, and M.N.
 Ghatate, chief of the Nagpur unit. Ashok
 Singhal, the joint general secretary of the
 VHP and the yagna's main organiser, was the
 regional chief for Delhi, Punjab and
 Haryana of the RSS till he joined the VHP two
 years ago. Harmohan Lal, the bearded gen-
 eral secretary of the VHP, earlier led the RSS's
 Mera unit.

As a matter of fact, the VHP central

office in New Delhi now functions from
 Scindia Villa, the house of Rajmata Vijaya
 Raje Scindia, who is a vice-president of the
 Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a promi-
 nent leader of the so-called RSS-liners in the
 party who are said to be unhappy about the
 party's recent efforts to acquire a secular
 image. The Rajmata is also a life trustee of
 the VHP.

The *Ekatmata Yagna* testifies to the
 well-known RSS penchant for organising
 shows, minding the details and mobilising
 trained workers. The 50,000 volunteers di-
 rectly in charge of the yatras, says Abhedya-
 nand, "have undoubtedly had training in
 the RSS; and that's their most important as-
 set." It is borne out by the uniformity of the
 speeches, the clever blending of hype and
 hope, the orderliness of the programmes,
 and the impressive punctuality of the yatras.
 The caravans arrive at the appointed place
 on the dot, the prayers are over and the spee-
 ches made on the dot; then they pack up to
 reach the next destination strictly on schedu-
 le. Said Vijay Kumar Dwivedy, yatra-pra-
 mukh of nine districts in eastern Uttar Pra-
 desh: "We move like participants in a car
 rally. Every minute is accounted for."

Each caravan has a truck, hired at Rs
 250 a day; two matador vans, for Rs 125 a
 day each; and three jeeps, also hired at Rs

1.25 a day. Fuel is extra. The caravan covers
 90 to 125 km a day, and costs Rs 1,800 daily.
 The 92 caravans, when all them get going,
 will cost nearly Rs 1.8 lakh a day, the whole
 show costing an estimated Rs 60 lakh. But the
 expense is minimal compared to the public
 response it has generated, and receipts dona-
 tions will far exceed expenses. Dwivedy spent
 three nights with the caravan, while travel-
 ling down the districts of Basti and Gorakh-
 pur. He had taken 6,000 portraits of Bharat
 mata, printed in four colours offset and
 priced at 50 paise apiece. His stocks were
 sold out on the first day, to his utter amaze-
 ment, and the press in Varanasi said they
 could not cope with further orders. The yatra
 was only three-day old in his area, and his
 stock of 70,000 bottles of Ganga jal was
 nearly exhausted. Insiders say the march will
 fetch donation and sales worth over Rs 2.5
 crore—exactly twice what the organisers
 had originally expected.

The Congress(I) is naturally worried be-
 cause it thinks that the visible tide of Hindu
 revivalism in north India will affect its pro-
 spects in the coming Lok Sabha elections.
 But Tripathi's fulminations may well be a
 surface phenomenon of the party, because,
 lower down, there is no discernible animosity
 between the RSS-VHP workers and the Cong-
 ress(I) rank and file. At Bansi tehsil in Basti



The caravan stops in an eastern Uttar Pradesh village: unexpectedly large gathering

SPECIAL REPORT

District, the block Congress(I) committee had put up a banner at the arched gate leading to the reception ground: it read, "The Bansi Block Congress(I) Committee Welcomes you." At a VHP meeting in Chandigarh this year, where the plan for the *Ekatmat Yagna* was discussed, the distinguished "Hindus" in the gathering included R.L. Bhattia, president of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (PPCC-I).

Political Connections: "We are an entirely non-political organisation," says Harmohan Lal, twirling his snowy beard. "We are for any politician who thinks and acts like a Hindu," says Singhal, thumbing through a VHP brochure that calculates the present year as 5085 in the *yugabda* calendar which, he says, had begun from the year of the Kurukshetra war ("850 B.C. is a concoction of the western historians"). "We make no distinction between Atal Behari (Atal Behari Vajpayee, BJP president) and Indira. Both are bad, both are politicians. When Atal Behari was in power, the RSS was banned here," says Abhedyananda. When closely questioned, they say they admired Mrs Gandhi's "toughness" towards Pakistan, and her "positive role" in Jammu.

Dwivedy, in his more suburban manner, says he expects Mrs Gandhi to be as good a Hindu as "the King and Queen of Nepal", who apart from giving a hefty donation, had flagged off the caravan from the palace in Kathmandu. "I want to make Nepal the real Hindustan": reads a legend on the canopy, which is designed by the Nepal Government, on the main truck.

The *yagna* is apolitical on the surface, but the inner logic that runs through it is political: as against the Muslim vote bank of about 10 per cent of the electorate, who cast their votes for one party, the Hindus have no comparable chunk support to offer which is why parties in power always woo the Muslims. It would be possible to woo and carve out a similar vote bank from among the Hindus, who form 85 per cent of the population anyway. Only this would end the policy of appeasing the Muslims.

Tripathi's tantrum apart, the Congress(I) is not really putting its heart into opposing

the *yagna* at all levels. Mrs Gandhi so far has not replied to any of the three letters sent to her by the VHP inviting her to the central rally in New Delhi on November 17. But nor has she personally issued any statement condemning it. The organisers interpret it with the Sanskrit phrase: *mounam sanmatilakshanam* (silence is consent). Says one of them: "We have no quarrel even with Tripathi, who is a devout Hindu. He is only worried about Muslim votes and perhaps has deluded himself into believing that the Hindu votes can be taken for granted. But Mrs Gandhi understands it."

It may still be premature to attribute the overt popularity of the yatras to any kind of Hindu backlash; but the VHP is surely cashing in on the new Muslim militancy, the recent marks of affluence seen in the Muslim areas of Uttar Pradesh as a result of the Gulf boom and remittance economy, the new mosques springing up almost daily, and the latest tendency among Muslim MP's to get to-

gether cutting across the party lines; in this background, the call of the *muzak* daily prayers assumes an eerie poignancy.

Coming Together: The VHP has achieved remarkable success in camouflage its main objective and securing the all-important sanction from Hindu society's spiritual heads. The 85 holy men who form the *kendriya margadarshak mandal* (central advisory council) of the *yagna* include representatives of virtually every major sub-sect—starting from the followers of Sankara (8th Century A.D.), the Jain Naths, the Vaishnava sadhus to Sikhs, Namdhari sub-sect and Buddhists from Jammu, Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Most of them came straight down from their mountain abodes where they live as recluses. Others represented the worldly and popular faiths, such as the Arya Samaj, the sect established by Dayanand Saraswati, which does not believe in idol worship.

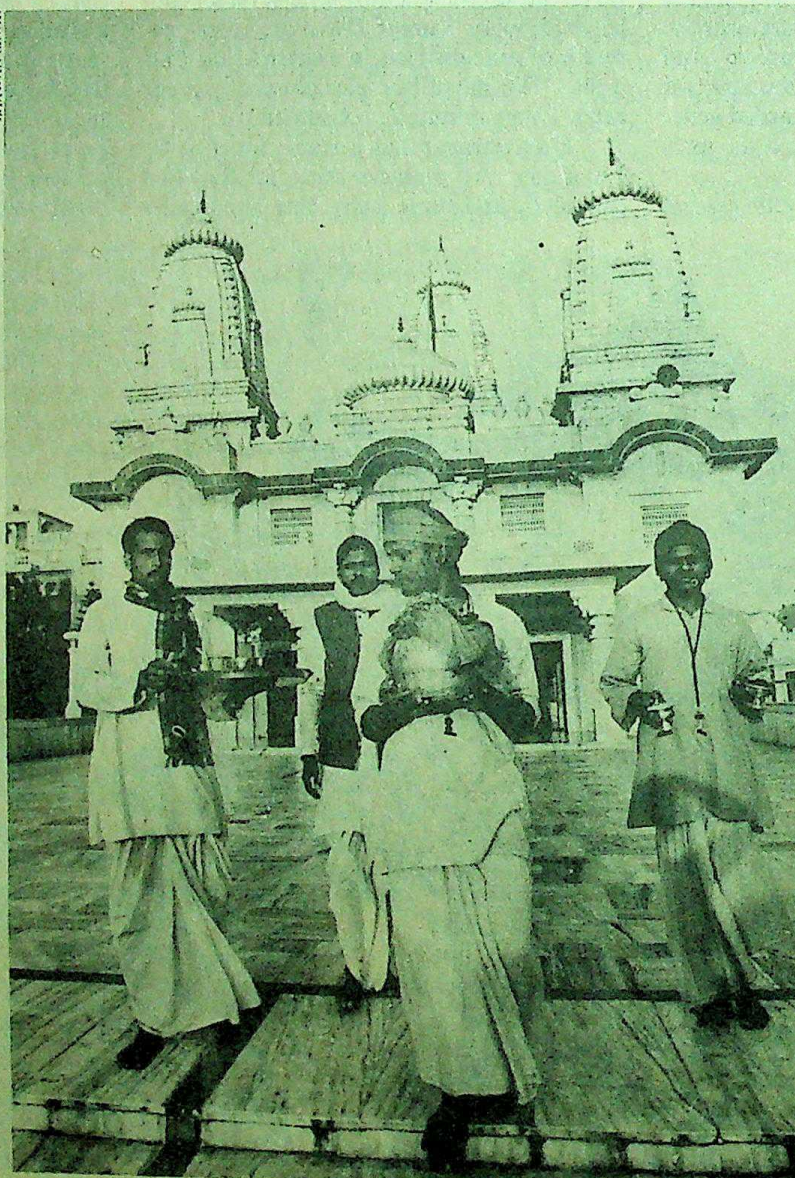
Significantly, they have endorsed

VHP's contention that the caste system and untouchability are alien to the Hindu scriptures and that the Hindu society can be united only by abolishing untouchability. However, there is still a conservative fringe to the ascetics who regard it as heresy and do not come to VHP. They are two Sankaracharyas of Dwarka. Both have publicly supported untouchability. This year, the trustees of the Jagannath Temple, Puri foiled a plan by a Sankaracharya to stop Gandhi from entering the temple. The Sankaracharya had reportedly objected on the ground that she had married a Parsi.

Of the four Sankaracharyas, or the head priests of the main Sankara temples at Dwarka, Jyotirpeeth, Sringeri, only Swami Sivanand, the chief of the Dwarka temple, has protested against the *yagna*. But his was a lone voice and was easily drowned in the chorus of demand for solidarity and action. Behind the tumult of electoral politics, and maybe beyond the immediate future, this alone may signal the most radical change in the oldest of the world's existing religions.

—SUMIT

in G



Gorakhnath temple priests carry holy water in a kalas to the main kalas



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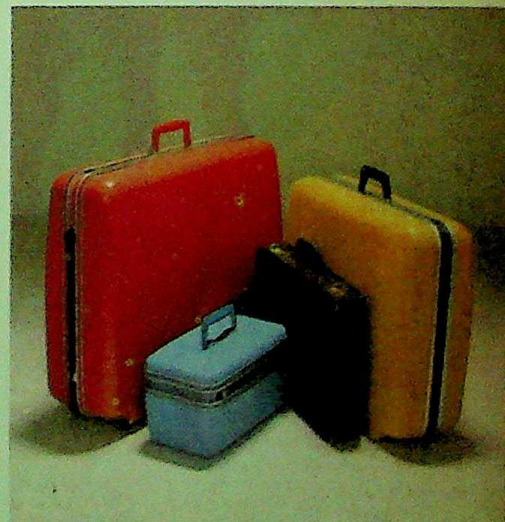
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CONDEMNED men are usually allowed their last wish. But not Shashikant Parmar, a convict sentenced to death in Rajkot Jail who wanted to donate one of his kidneys to a sick patient. Instead of welcoming his offer the state government pulled out its rule book and announced that he could not be permitted to part with his kidney as this might endanger his health. And under the rules of the Jail Manual, as the state Government solicited pointed out, Parmar would have to be in good health to be hanged.

Parmar is, however, not one to give up easily. Last fortnight, he went all the way to the Gujarat High Court with a writ petition pleading that he should be allowed to donate his kidney. Meanwhile he has announced that his eyes will be donated for transplant and his body given over for medical research.

Parmar is not the only convict who is determined to donate a kidney to whosoever may need. Several other prisoners serving life sentences have chosen this way to atone for past misdeeds. One convict Govind Ramadas, 40, "I murdered an innocent man. By donating a kidney to a dying man I want to overcome my guilt." Adds Bhupatdan Gadhvi, 32, a convict sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering his wife three years ago: "I'll spend all my life, but donating a kidney will make me feel better."

Enthusiastic Response: The convicts at Sabarmati and elsewhere were inspired to make their sacrifice by Sadvichar Parivar a social work organisation that has been doing welfare work in Sabarmati Jail. Three months ago the Parivar distributed pamphlets in the jail requesting convicts to save lives by donating a kidney each. The campaign evoked an instantaneous response and five convicts announced that they were willing to donate their kidneys.

The enthusiastic response from the convicts of Sabarmati has encouraged Sadvichar Parivar to spread its wings further afield. Late last week Haribhai Panchal, the chief of the Parivar, was busy sending out appeals for kidney donations to all the convicts on the rolls around the country. Panchal decries the organisation's work, pointing out that nearly 50,000 kidneys are needed in hospitals for transplants every year but only

about 250 are available. He optimistically points out that a systematic campaign in the jails could make up this shortfall saying: "There are 963 jails in the country. With a little effort we can easily persuade the inmates to help save precious lives." He also lashes out at the Government saying: "What is the logic behind not allowing a convict to donate his kidneys? Kidney donors have never been known to become unhealthy after the operation."

The Government obviously does not see eye to eye with Panchal on this issue. The moment Parmar made his request to the state Home Department it was clear that it would be viewed with scepticism. The Government's main fears revolve around the clause in the Jail Manual which specifies that a prisoner must be in good health at the time he is hanged. Now, as more convicts respond to Sadvichar Parivar's appeal, Home Department officials are making fresh attempts to sort out the issue. Says R.V. Chandra-

mouli, additional chief secretary: "This is an unusual situation. We do not know how to cope with it as we have to strictly follow the Jail Manual. The health of the prisoners is our responsibility and we cannot allow them to do anything which might endanger their health. Anyway we are trying legally to examine the whole issue."

Baseless Fears:

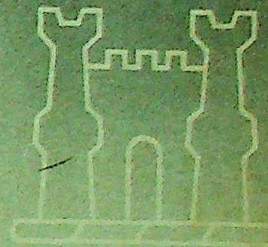
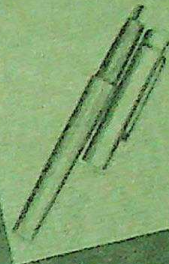
Meanwhile as the state Government ponders over the issue, Sadvichar Parivar is trying its best to stress the fact that people can afford to part with a kidney without harming their health at all. Says Sadvichar Parivar worker Rajesh Shah, 30, who donated a kidney in 1976: "Fear due to ignorance is the main reason why many do not want to donate their kidneys."

The Parivar is trying to wipe out such fears. But first of all it has to win a little support from the state Government. Says Panchal: "Is it not ironical? Kidneys are being sold for sums as large as Rs 1 lakh in Bombay and here we have prisoners who of their own will agree to donate a kidney expecting nothing in return. But the Government is viewing this with suspicion and caution."

But Panchal vows that he will not give up his campaign quickly and as it gathers ground it is clear that the Government may soon face more cases like Parmar's. And the days to come will show whether the convicts are stopped by the Government from making a last attempt to do a good turn for mankind.

—RAMESH MENON

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GURUKUL KANGRI

Teaching Tradition

WITH the sun still low in the eastern sky, the *yagna kutir* comes to life. The leaping flames of the havan symbolise a past on which the Gurukul Kangri lives today and with the reflection of this fire dancing in the eyes of 200 concentrating students, the daily yagna starts. The entire assembly—in sparkling white kurta pyjamas—begins the slow Vedic chant as five novices—hardly out of babyhood—with heads shaved, except for the traditional *bodhi* (tuft of hair), make their way to the centre.

The rest of the brahmacharis (students) keep up the rhythmic chant, while their gurus, similarly dressed, move silently among them distributing *jenauos* (the sacred thread). A Sikh boy from Delhi's Paharganj leads the chants which pick up intensity and then fade away to a final "om shanti...shanti...shanti..." after which kurtas come off in a flurry of arms. The old *jenauos* are replaced by new ones and a few more shlokas are repeated. Then Shastriji takes the floor and explains to the concentrating brahmacharis the meaning of the thread ceremony, their duty to their country, their parents and to their religion.

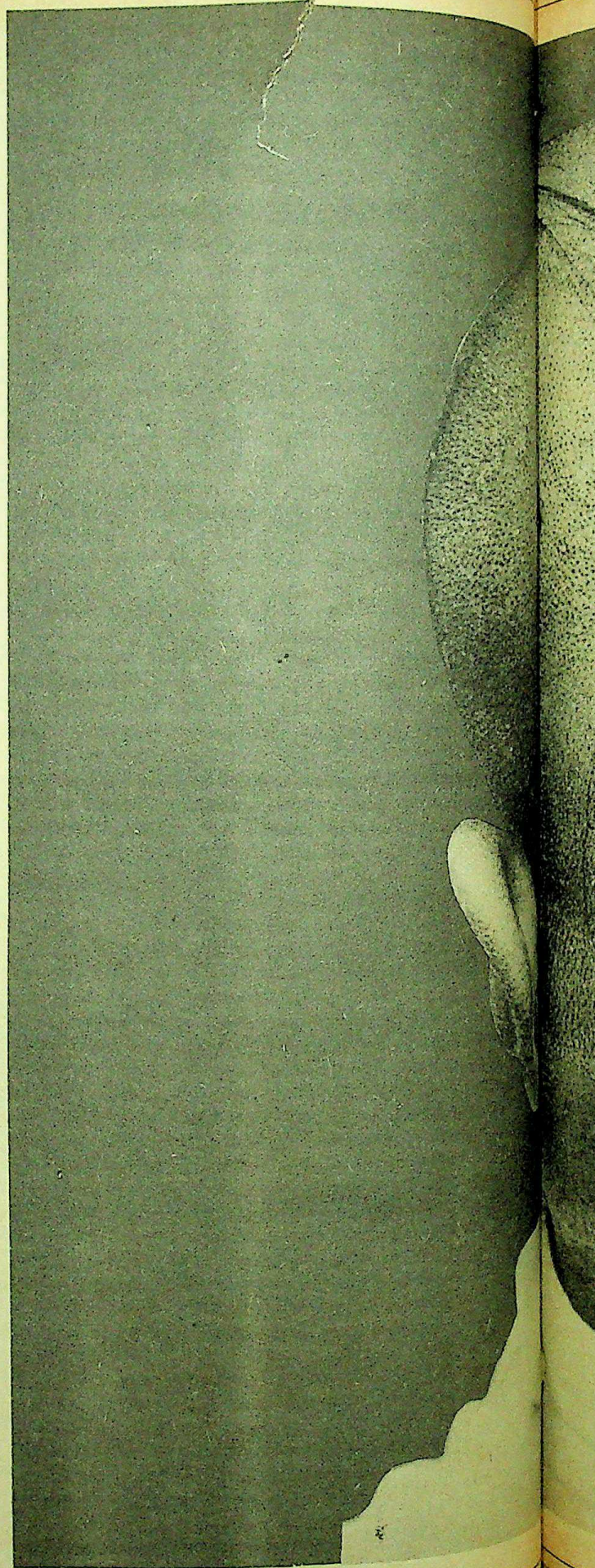
Situated near Haridwar, on the banks of the Chhoti Ganga, the gates of Gurukul Kangri Vidyalaya stand like neglected monuments of an ancient past. The approach through the narrow, dirty streets with tongas and sleeping dogs, contrasts with the striking beauty of the Gurukul itself. Established in 1900 by Munshi Ram, better known as Swami Shradhanand, a leader of the Arya Samaj movement which gripped India in the earlier half of the century, the old buildings still throb with life as yet another generation of gurus and students live and learn within its hallowed walls. Their aim is simple: to live a life based on vedic principles and to keep the Hindu culture and religion alive.

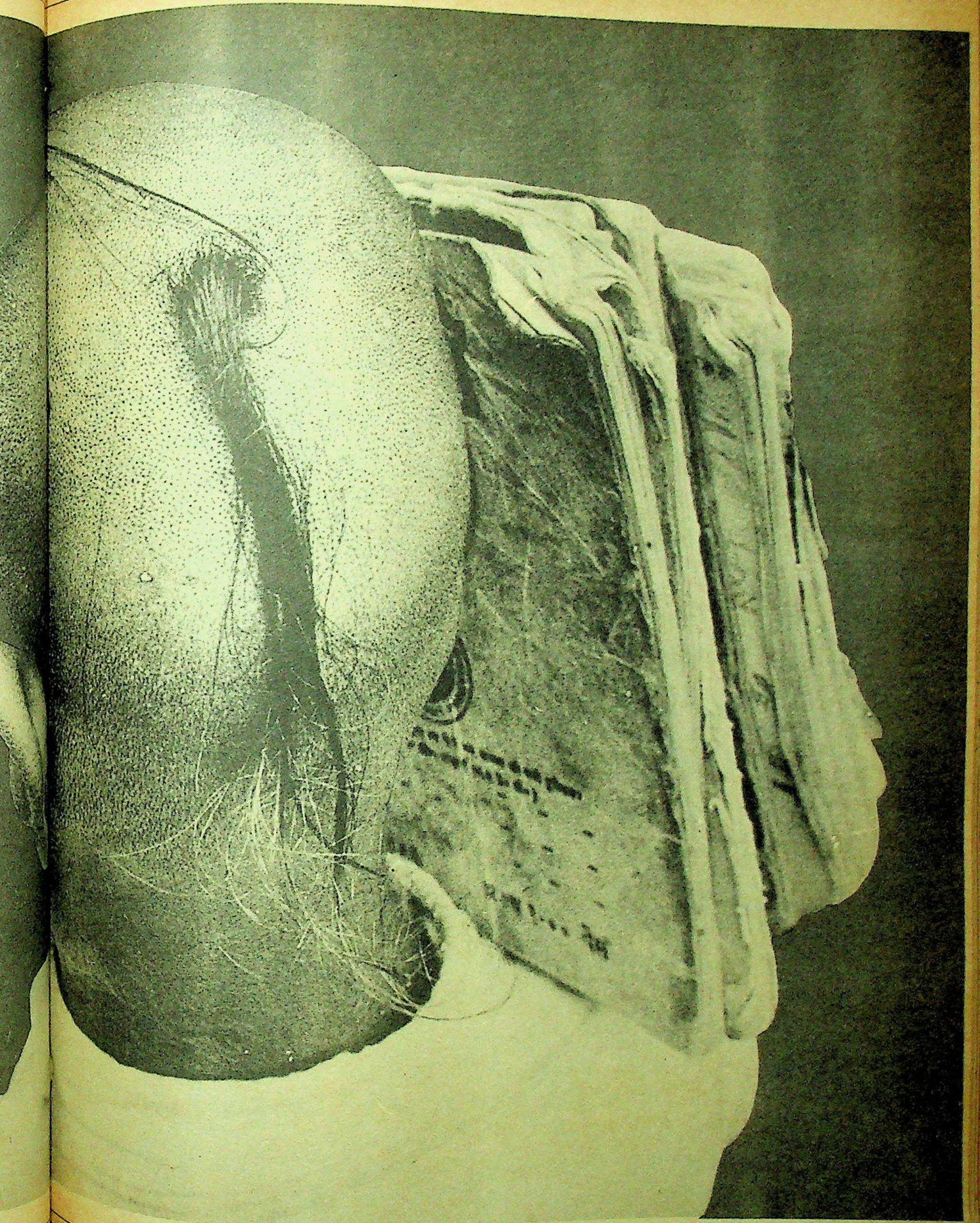
Shradhanand's aim was to establish the Gurukul near the mountains and a river, for he believed these were essential for the growth of a brahmachari. Though the Gurukul was initially founded at Kangri village, some 8 km from its present site and had the Ganga virtually at its doorstep floods in 1923 nearly washed the establishment away and forced Shradhanand to shift it to the present location. N.S. Verma, a former IAS officer who left the Gurukul in 1918 and now lives in a sprawling bungalow in Dehra Dun, remembers: "The place was an absolute jungle and tiger tracks were ever so common. Even the river had a fair share of crocodiles during those days—but that never deterred us from swimming in it."

A typical day at the Gurukul starts at 4.30 a.m. The harsh light of electric bulbs suddenly flashes on in the old building, and little boys in langotis (loin cloths) pour out of their dormitories, rubbing their eyes and carrying small pots—*lotas*. Within minutes, the sleepy Gurukul is throbbing with activity as older students earnestly guide the younger boys. In half an hour, they form long lines, and wait expectantly for their gurus to begin the yoga exercises.

Spartan Lifestyle: A Gurukul is like an academic family where there is a continuous daily contact between the gurus and the students—known as brahmacharis. Living with them in the same dormitories, the gurus lead the way with personal example. Life is hard, and every minute is regulated in the search of knowledge and physical fitness. The hour-long period of yoga is by itself exhaust-

A young brahmachari after school: keeping the past alive





ing, yet at the end of it the boys still have a bubbling enthusiasm for their next chore.

After a wash at the *snanghar*—the bath house—the brahmacharis and gurus assemble at the open air *yagna kutir* where the sacred thread ceremony was held. After a simple breakfast, consisting of rusks and milk—tea is forbidden—the brahmacharis disperse to continue with their daily routine.

Despite the regimented life at the Gurukul, there's an eagerness behind every movement. The involvement of the students in

New brahmacharis go through the sacred thread ceremony and (right) yoga exercise

their work is amazing. Said Eishwar Bhardwaj, a guru: "Often students are sent here by their parents when they can no longer control them. Yet, discipline here has never been the problem, for students who join simply follow the gurus and the older boys." Even the act of washing clothes is treated with grins of delight. Soap suds running in all directions, the boys laugh and play with each other as they wash their small bundles. Later, watching the students plunge into the fast flowing Ganga canal in preparation for a swimming meet with the same gay abandon, Bhardwaj added, "Our boys have self-discipline and a belief that looks after them when

they leave. Peace of mind is God's gift and the Vedic principles on which our country, the education is based teaches them to differentiate between right and wrong. They are taught to work hard and then success in their studies is only a matter of time."

High Standards: Reiterating the principles on which the Gurukul was founded, Sengar, registrar of its Vishva Vidyapeeth, says: "*Sandhya* and *havan* conducted daily, Swamiji's day is our biggest link with our heritage. The aim was to produce a generation of students who would help create an independent India", and spread the message of the Gurukul to the world. Teaching in the language of the country, the Gurukul uses Sanskrit as a leading feature. Swamiji's other tongue, the Vedics, is the basis of the Gurukul's education. The past is on. Its somewhat



country, the Gurukul has had high standards of education since its inception. Sanskrit, mathematics, history, the sciences and religious studies are the main subjects. Said Verma: "Hindi translations of all the subjects are of an amazingly high standard. The Gurukul used to attract boys from some of the leading families in our time, for undoubtedly, Swamiji's experiment of teaching in the mother tongue and leading a life based on the Vededic principles proved to be a great success." The past is perhaps what the Gurukul lives on. Its 125-acre campus with beautiful, somewhat neglected buildings, has failed

to create a place for itself in today's competitive society. The campus would match any public school in the country, yet there has been a sharp decline in the Gurukul's standards since Independence. The students are from middle class backgrounds and their future is uncertain. Says Verma: "Shradhanand's exit to fight for the country's Independence left the then flourishing Gurukul rudderless, for none of his successors had the ability to strike a balance with the changing times." Even though the Vishva Vidyalaya awards its senior students the degree of Vidyamartand, recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) as being equiva-

lent to a Ph.D., the Gurukul does not enjoy the same status as it did before.

Mounting Problems: But today the institution which was the pride of the Arya Samaj, faces a greater problem from within. Since the floods in 1923 forced Shradhanand to abandon the old site at Kangri and settle for Jagjitpur, its present site, the Gurukul has had financial problems. In 1926, Shradhanand set up the Ayurvedic Pharmacy which was to supply the vidyalaya with Rs 35,000 every month to add to money raised by donations. With Shradhanand's departure in the '30s none of the Arya Samajists was able to raise such money. The fees today are

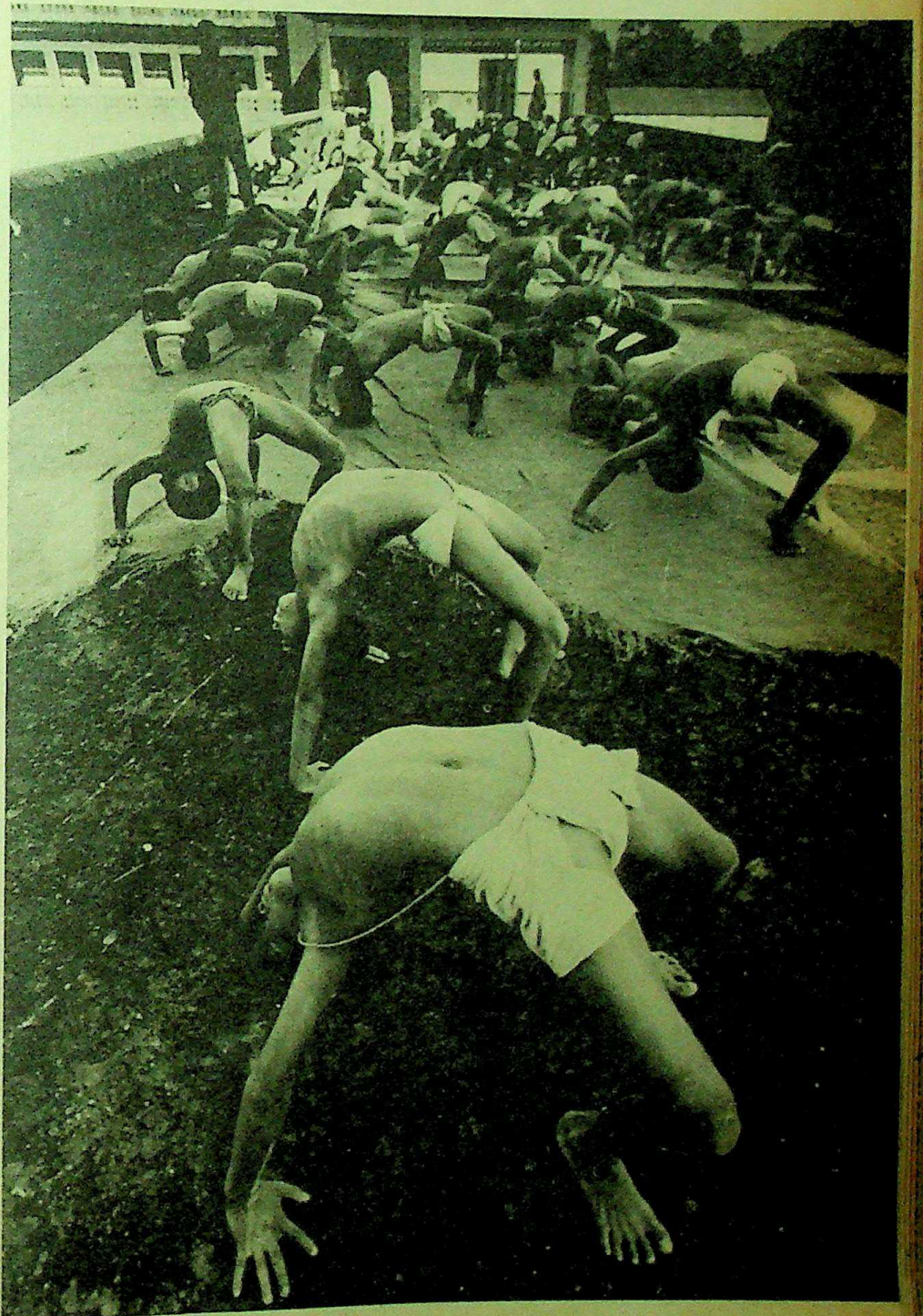
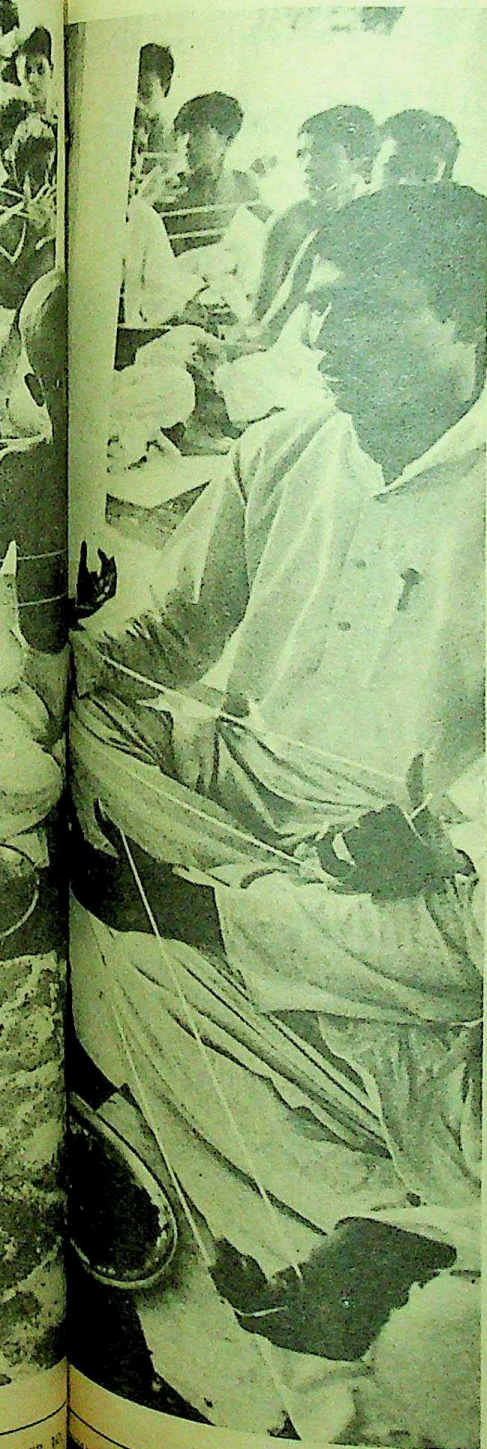


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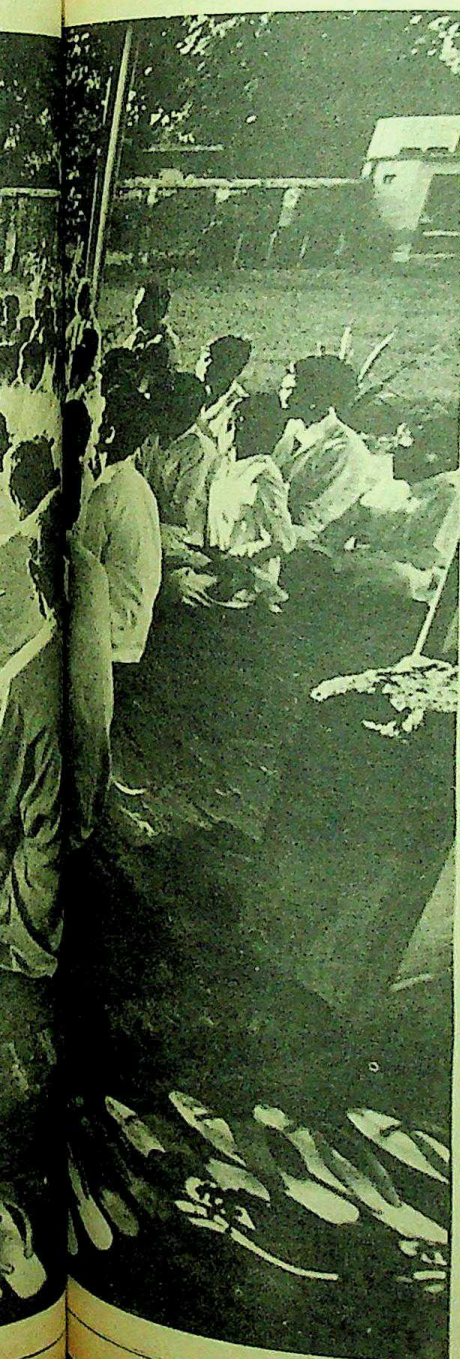
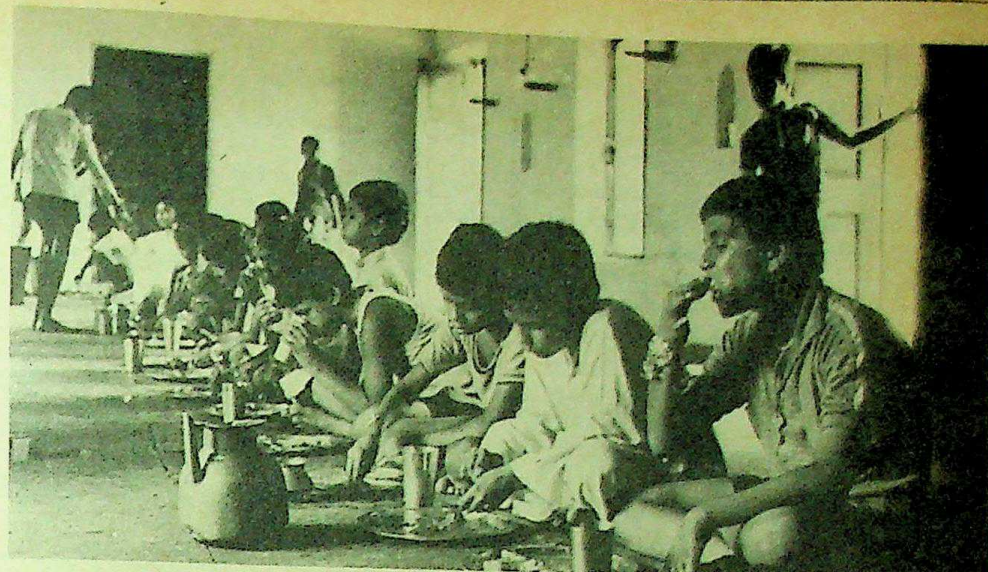
Rs 150 per month, which net a month-
30,000 from 200 students. Said C
Deshray, assistant governor of the G
"The fees barely cover the mainten
the campus. What we get from all o
dents is what an institution like the
School gets from five students in a
To further add to their problem
Ayurvedic Pharmacy stopped its m
grant to the vidyalaya following a
between its General Manager, Dr
Prakash, and the Gurukul's governing
the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. Said

(Anti-clockwise from left) A guruji lecturing; the morning yagna; a class monitor, helped by the chalks up the attendance figures for the



even though the Pratinidhi Sabha meets expenses now, there are often delays. Said the Gurukul has had to be maintained on all costs. Already the Gurukul has had to be like the Vishva Vidyalaya is run by the Government since it came under the UGC in 1933; the ayurvedic college was taken over by the state Government two years ago. The Gurukul remains a reminder of the Gurukul's ambitions and a part of the past few years to remember. Meanwhile the students wake at dawn, their life remaining as before and hard as before, but each day now with it the same question—how long the Gurukul succeed in carrying on as an anachronism in the society it was formed to replace?

—KUNAL VERMA in Haridwar



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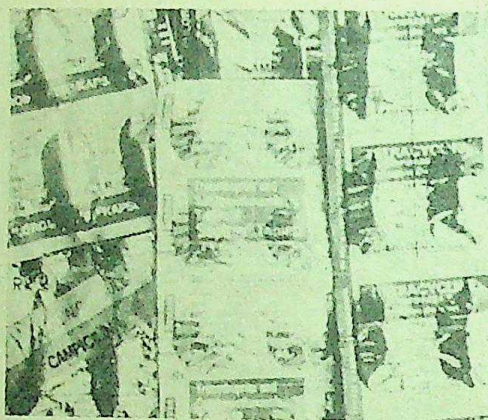
Alarming Symptoms

WHEN Baby, a seven-month-old from Delhi's West Patel Nagar, was brought to Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan Hospital last month with acute diarrhoea, doctors took her ailment to be readily curable. After a dose of the wonder antibiotic, chloramphenicol, was administered, the first pathological report came in. It showed the spread of the culprit micro-organism, *Salmonella typhi*, in its most harrowing form: it was resistant to not only chloramphenicol but to almost every antibiotic drug known to pharmacologists.

Baby died of shock and dehydration, but the death only brought into focus a question tormenting the medical profession for many years now: how to tackle the bugs that are learning fast to survive antibiotic attacks. In the ongoing war between antibiotics and the bacteria, virtually every weapon known to medical science has been blunted or is in the process of getting blunted. Penicillin, the panacea of the '50s, is now virtually of no use except in some forms of sore throat and rheumatic fever. Tetracycline, the magic cure of the '60s, has lost its efficacy in most cases. Chloramphenicol no longer cures all types of enteric fever. Even Septran, a favourite combination of two anti-microbial compounds known as trimethoprame

and sulphonamide, is fast losing its edge. For doctors, the arsenal is getting depleted faster than they had imagined.

Belated Realisation: The problem is not confined to India, but, true to its style, India has woken up to it rather late in the day. And that too after the World Health Organisation had repeatedly pointed out the danger of the Indian population being bombarded with Rs 400 crore worth of antibiotics every year by over a million registered practitioners of indigenous medicine whose acquaintance with the intricacies of micro-biology is at best at the nodding level.



Antibiotics: overused drugs

After three years of effort, the Council of Medical Research (ICMR), recently with a report, compiled by a specially appointed task force, on the closing battle on the bacterial front. V. Lingaswami, director-general of the ICMR, a renowned pathologist, who was a member of the task force, wrote to the Union Ministry last fortnight urging it to take without delay a national antibiotic policy and to make it mandatory for all hospitals to introduce an "antibiotic auditing system".

Though couched in technical language, the report brought out significant aspects of antibiotic abuse in the country, namely:

- a large number of people were buying antibiotics bought off the shelf from chemists without any prescription;

- the hospitals were overusing antibiotics and were routinely resorting to antibiotic therapy even when the infections were of viral nature and no known antibiotic had any effect on viral organisms;

- and, as a result, the extent and rate of transferable drug resistance, or the "R-factor" was on the rise (see box). The use of high dosage or drug combinations is no answer against R-factor-induced resistance.

Indiscriminate Use: The extent of indiscriminate medication with antibiotics and their overuse have reached an alarming proportion. A survey conducted by members of the task force showed that of 10 purchased antibiotic drugs in Delhi, seven were uncalled for, and two were in excess of the

DRUG RESISTANCE

Hidden Threat

DRUG RESISTANCE among bacteria is the result of a complex process of microbiological mutation. The antibiotics kill off sensitive bacteria, but one in a million of the germs eventually mutates to acquire resistance. In 1946, Lederberg, the Nobel Prize-winning American scientist, unravelled the mystery of this mutation. He showed that the resistant gene (building blocks of the chromosome, by which hereditary characters are determined), acquiring the property to survive an antibiotic attack, would cleave away from the mesh of chromosomes in the cell's nucleus. It would then form an extra-chromosomal existence (much like an outlaw living outside the society) as an R (for resistance) — plasmid (a secondary chromosome). Then it may even draw in other chromosomal genes as R-plasmids, which are the central fortress of anti-antibiotic resistance. The R-plasmid can be transferred anywhere, spreading resistant strains

among all bacteria it might come in contact with.

The kingpin in the R-plasmid transfer is an otherwise "friendly" bacteria known as *Escherichia coli*, or E-coli, that lives within human intestines and releases enzymes that are useful to the body. With the advent of antibiotics following the Second World War, E-coli was the first to get mutated with R-plasmids. Eventually it conjugated with other bacteria that infect the intestine, and transferred its R-plasmids to them.

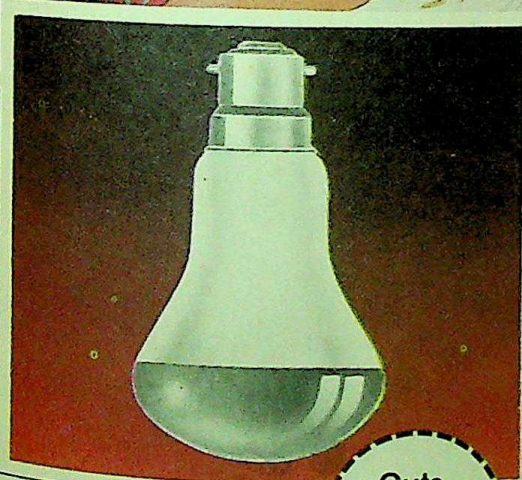
Stronger Strains: *Shigella*, a common group of bacteria causing dysentery, which has a genetic make-up that would not easily permit it to give rise to resistant strains, was among the first to receive an R-plasmid from E-coli. A *Shigella* epidemic, manifesting as food poisoning, swept through Japan in the late '50s, defying all attempts at control through antibiotic therapy. The R-plasmid struck in India in 1972 when 3,000 cases of enteric fever were reported from Kerala: the disease was caused by the bacteria *Salmonella typhi* which had received R-plasmid and was resistant to

antibiotics. In 1978, eight strains of *Salmonella typhi* with drug resistance patterns were isolated in Chandigarh. In 1978-79, there was an outbreak of enteric fever caused by the drug resistant strains over a hundred died.

Till 1976, gonorrhoea was sensitive to the "five-shot cure", or five injections of penicillin, as it was widely practised in the flesh markets of the world. However, even gonococcus, the micro-organism responsible for gonorrhoea, received an R-plasmid, presumably from E-coli and through homosexual contacts.

The epicentre was believed to be Hong Kong: but, within years, the resistant strains of gonococcus raged through India and the Middle East, finally to reach Europe and America. In the process, the genes mutated further to give rise to a large variety of Multiple Drug Resistant strains, the ultimate stage of which may be the dreaded and not clearly understood Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), the scourge of public health in America which threatens to ricochet back into the East at any time.

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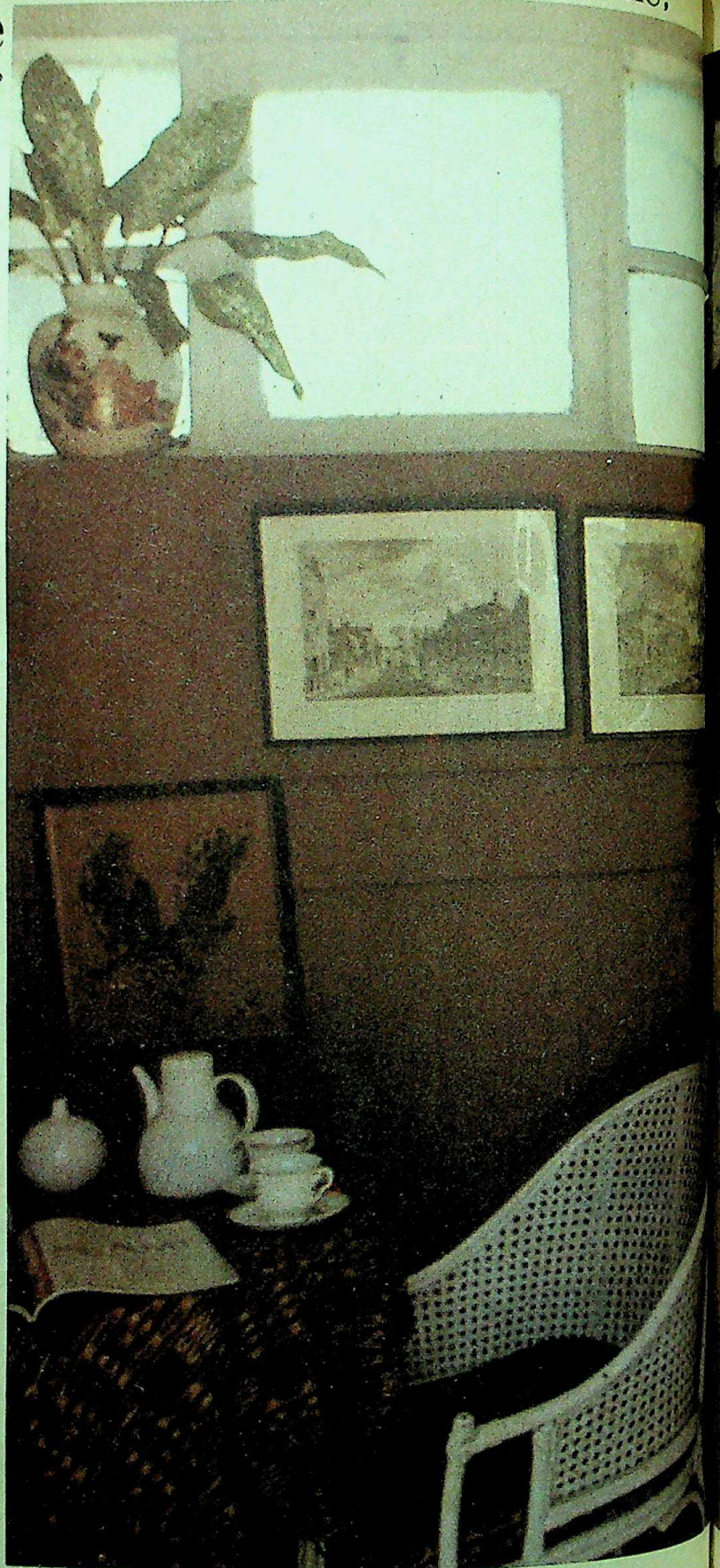
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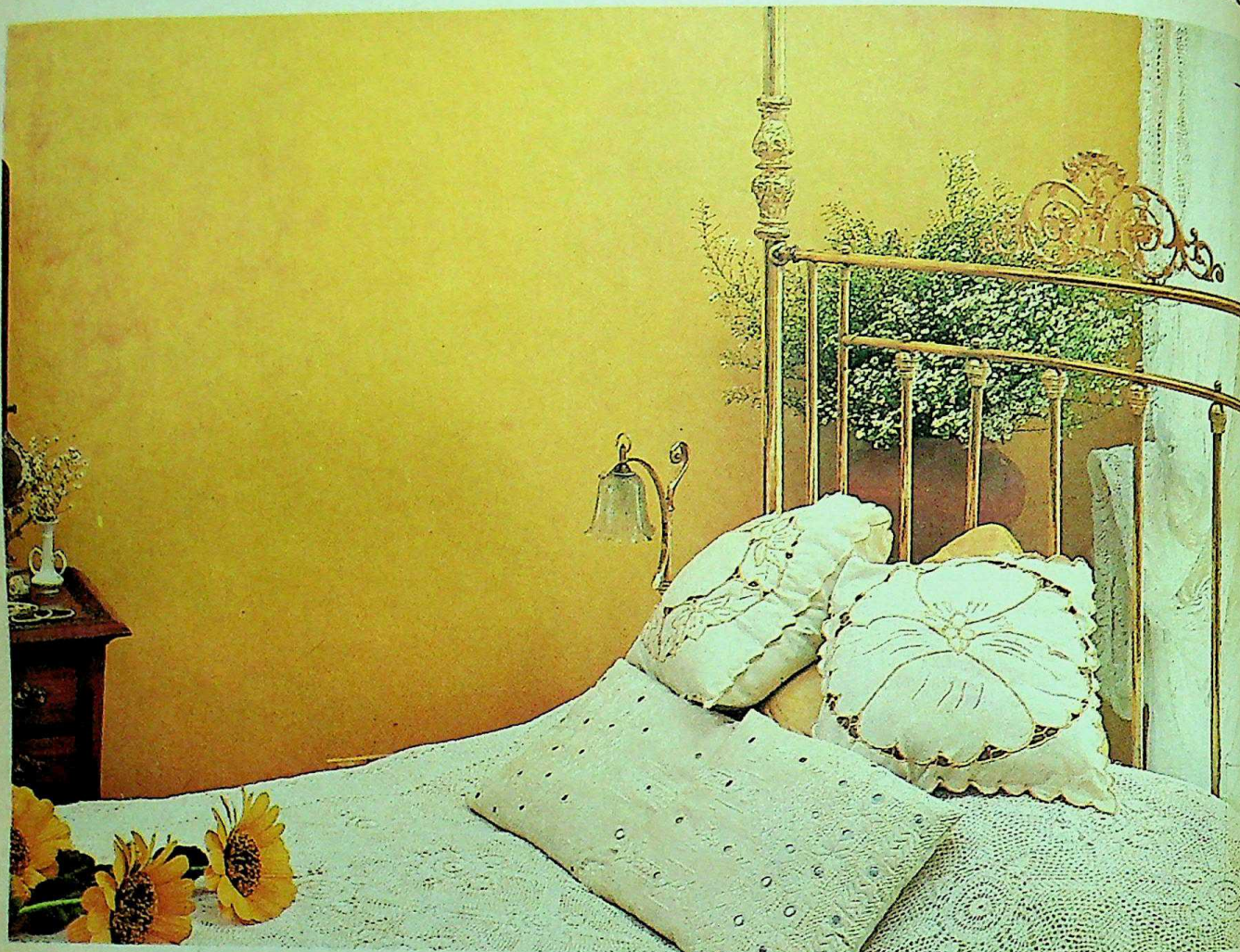


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Only about five in a hundred shops in the capital insisted on a prescription before dispensing antibiotic drugs. In the districts, even country doctors trained in Indian herbal medicine prescribed antibiotics without any concern for dosage specificity. Even in sophisticated hospitals patients are administered a combination of streptomycin and penicillin before surgery even though the combination is virtually useless against most known bacterial infections.

K.B. Sharma, eminent microbiologist and dean of the capital's Maulana Azad Medical College, who is also a member of the task force, paints a dismal picture of the state of India's war on microbes. For five years now, Sharma has been urging the Health Ministry to initiate an antibiotic policy and take legal steps to check self-medication. "By overuse of antibiotics," says Sharma, "the ratio between drug-sensitive bacteria and the resistant strains is getting disturbed, with the countervailing effect of the sensitive bacteria minimised, the pool of resistant strains is multiplying rapidly."

Wide Repercussions: Cited a study made in the capital's Lady Hardinge Medical College where 40 per cent of patients not exposed to antibiotics showed resistant strains of E-coli in their urine. Three years later, their resistance grew to 80 per cent. He

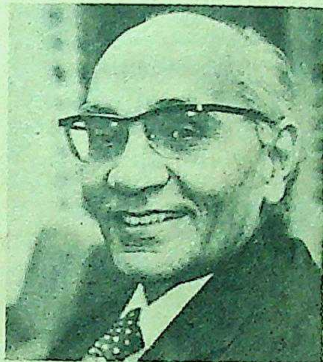
"Abuse of antibiotics affects the entire country, because it keeps on adding to the number of resistant strains. Now I am receiving patients with resistant strains even from towns like Sevagram in Wardha, or steel towns like Rourkela, where the use of antibiotic abuse is presumably less than in the cities."

The drug industry in India has pushed the use of common antibiotics often without concern for the latent danger of overuse. Of the 23 antibiotics manufactured in India at present, notes the task force's report, only two processes are indigenously developed. The rest are imported processes, many of which have been long discarded in the West in view of their falling efficacy. The tired range of drugs was being indiscriminately used in India by patients as well as practitioners. The report adds: "Prophylactic antibiotic therapy appeared to be the most important form of abuse of an antibiotic. Antibiotics were being used in almost all cases of diarrhoea. Many diarrhoeal illnesses in infancy and childhood were believed to be of bacterial origin. Diarrhoea due to vibrio cholerae and E-coli were toxin-mediated and did

not require the use of antibiotics. Antibiotics given routinely following surgical operations for preventing wound infection, peritonitis, meningitis were unwarranted."

The task force does not recommend a drastic cut in antibiotic production because, as Sharma said: "They have still not outlived their necessity." Penicillin, for example, is still effective against streptococcal infection of the respiratory system which may lead to rheumatism of the heart among children. In India, there are 7 million children suffering from rheumatic heart, and, for them, penicillin is still the drug of choice. "But," says Sharma, "I'm worried about the future: maybe all of a sudden, the streptococcus will show the same resistant trait as the gonococcus did in 1976."

Ineffective Measures: Ramalingaswamy, in his appeal to the Health Ministry, stressed the need for exercising "self-discipline" in the use of antibiotics. He said the Drug Control Act provided for punishment against chemists selling antibiotics without prescription, "but no one cares to enforce it". He pointed at the mounting demand by the public for yet stronger antibiotics and the "relentless propagandist pressure from the drug companies". He also recommended a "tripartite action programme", involving the medical profession, the patients and the manufacturers.



Ramalingaswami:
forewarning

Over the past decade, nearly every western country has evolved its antibiotic policy, thus phasing out ineffective drugs from the market, making prescriptions mandatory, monitoring the appearance of resistant strains, and constantly educating the society on the hazards of antibiotic overuse. But, in India, which accounts for 1/12th of world antibiotic consumption, its abuse has spread unchecked, turning it into a melting pot of aberrant microbiological growth.

Scientists apprehend that if the present trend continues, epidemics that are particularly of an enteric nature and are resistant to most available antibiotics will visit the country in frequent waves. Theoretically, it is still possible to combat the resistant strains with more sophisticated medicines. But the Indian drug industry bulk-produces only the cruder variants, and complex antibiotics like gentamycin are still beyond the reach of the common people, each dose of it costing around Rs 12. "We are not prepared to meet an emergency on the bacterial front," said Sharma. In India at least, the invisible enemy has decidedly secured an edge over man.

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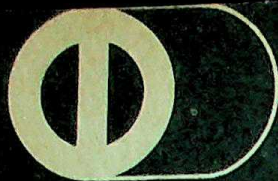
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Company's Name

Year Estd.

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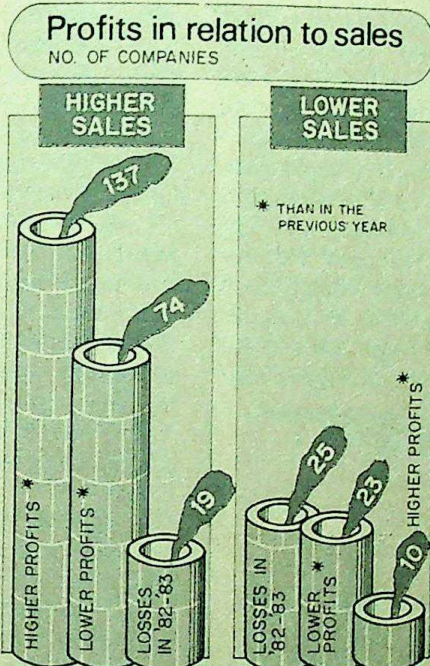
TAXING DUTIES

INDUSTRY's hopes of getting the Government's approval for staggering the payments of excise dues that had been under dispute have been dashed. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee has made it clear that no such permission will be given, and that all the tax dues must be paid in before the end of the financial year. However, since a large number of companies have been pleading that they simply do not have the liquid cash to pay up large sums (three industries alone—cigarettes, paper and tyres—owe Rs 350 crore), the finance minister has promised them extra loans from the commercial banks so that they can make the payments. He has argued with them that they have enjoyed the benefit of holding the tax money back for many years, free of interest, and that they are in no position to ask for any concessions at this stage, after the Supreme Court has declared that the disputed taxes are in fact payable to the Government. Anything between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 1,500 crore are believed to be involved, and lump sum payment of this will help the Government keep down its budgetary deficit, which has been threatening to get out of hand.

EEDING PROFITS

THE SECTORAL

industrial recession last year has shown up in indifference in corporate working. A survey of 300 companies by *Standard* shows sales in accounting that closed between 1982 and March increased by a meagre 12.8 per cent, down 21.6 per cent the previous year. Pre-tax profits did even worse, by no more than 1 per cent, compared to 1 per cent in the preceding year. Tax planning, however, seems to have come to the fore, and the tax payments accounted for a substantial 17.5 per cent, so that post-tax profits grew handsomely 19.4 per cent. Despite the general sluggishness, more than half the companies were eagerly investing in expansion and modernisation, though only a handful of the companies expected sales and profits to register better growth in 1983-84.



RAIDING PARTIES

THE GOVERNMENT'S enforcement and tax collection machinery has been put into high gear in recent months. Massive raids have been conducted on the premises of industrialists and traders, especially in Bombay, yielding Rs 60 crore in the first five months of the current year against no more than Rs 45 crore in all of 1982-83. With the pace of raids having been stepped up further since August, the full year might see record yields from the raids. In recent months, the raids have concentrated on steel traders, while there has been also an effort to come down hard on foreign exchange racketeering. Significance is also attached to the large-scale raids carried out on a leading Bombay textile magnate and his leading distributors and agents across the country. The industrialist in question is known for his contacts in high places.

SHIP-SHAPE

INDIAN shipping companies may soon get a 10 per cent price preference over rival foreign companies, if a proposal now being discussed by the Government goes through. This comes in place of an earlier proposal to mandatorily declare that 40 per cent of national cargo must be shipped in Indian bottoms. The Government is also working on a package proposal to bail out shipping companies, almost all of which are in trouble because of the prolonged slump in world shipping. Only three companies—Shipping Corporation of India, Great Eastern and South India Shipping—managed to avoid cash losses last year; and if depreciation is taken into account, even these were in the red.

NEWS STORY

LEASING activity has now hit the newspaper industry, and in a novel manner. Bennett Coleman, publishers of *The Times of India*, have hired out machinery (and, in a manner of speaking, some staff members, to a sister company for bringing out a Lucknow edition of the newspaper. The company concerned, Janasevak Karyalaya, has signed a five-year contract with Bennett Coleman for buying editorial matter and news reports. A contract has also apparently been signed for the provision of advertisement material. Rival newspapers in Lucknow have protested at this convoluted arrangement, which they have told the Government in an effort to get past the restrictions in force under the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act. Meanwhile, *The Times of India* plans to start at least one other edition, in Bangalore, while the rival *Indian Express* has found its proposal to start three new editions in different towns being referred to the MRTP Commission for its approval.

MEMBERSHIP QUESTION

CALCUTTA industrialist Jit Paul's disclosure that he has unearthed bogus members in the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) comes at a time when the organisation had already been seized of the membership question. This followed criticism earlier this year of the mass admission of new members, apparently under the aegis of some of the organisation's leading lights (INDIA TODAY, April 30). Following this, a committee had been set up to look into the membership question, and to fix new guidelines for admitting members. This, however, has proved a knotty question because three or four industrialists have already shored up their vote-banks in the organisation, and a tightening of the rules of entry at this stage will prevent the others from doing the same. This can be tackled only by excluding even the existing members to the new guidelines of membership, which is ruled out as virtually impossible legally.

DEVELOPMENT

The Indian Experience



IN ECONOMICS, as in life, there are often more questions than answers. Sometimes, there are no answers at all. After six five-year plans, three wars, seven presidents, five prime ministers, ten bumper harvests and as many droughts, there are millions of Indians who think that they have barely moved an inch, though the country is able to launch satellites in space and put up atomic power stations from scratch. Surely, goes the argument, if all the energy—and resources—that have gone into satellite launches and Asiads and other circuses had been channelled into such socially beneficial activities like providing water supply to villages, there would be less disillusionment in the country about what the Government is trying to achieve and, to that extent, greater progress? You are asked this question not only in Meerut and Rampur and Dindigul at home, but also in Rome and Paris and London where despite the show of satellites and nuclear power plants the rope trick and snakes syndrome still persists.

The main point, however, is not whether we should have this or that—in the space age a country like India cannot do without satellites—but whether after having both we should not try and get the best out of them. Let me explain what I mean in question-and-answer form:

Q. There is a general feeling in the country that somehow we have not done as well as many others have, or perhaps as well as we should have done. Why is that?

A. There is no doubt that many of us, perhaps most of us, are dissatisfied with the abysmally slow rate of progress, but this is true not only of India but quite a few other countries as well. Here of course the fact that we have not been able to make much of an impact on the problem of poverty remains a sore point. So, in a way, you are right.

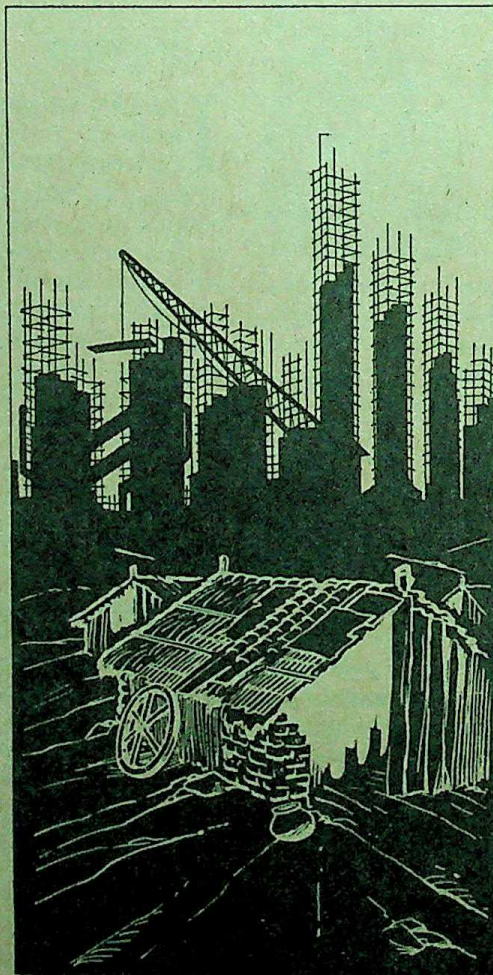
Q. What do you mean, in a way?

A. What I am trying to say is that just because we are dissatisfied with the present state of affairs, it doesn't mean there has been no progress, or that things have not improved. We should not confuse our subjective state of mind with the objective state of the economy. I shall give an example. I know a family in Bombay that has been living there for the last 50 or 60 years. The head of the family lived for years in a small tenement but now every member has moved out to the suburbs to flats of their own and

there is a TV and telephone in every flat. They are not rich people, just middle class professionals with jobs in the Government and private industry, but within one generation, a family that came to Bombay with nothing more than the clothes on their backs is now probably worth more than half a crore of rupees. And there are thousands of such families all over the country, possibly millions. You can't deny that this is progress.

Q. But there is still a feeling that we could have done much better.

A. I agree. Other countries have done much better. Japan, for instance, and Singapore and Hong Kong. I wouldn't however put Singapore and Hong Kong in the same bracket as India, for it is like comparing an elephant with a fly. If you compare, say, Bombay or New Delhi with Singapore, which incidentally has a population of only 20 lakh, you will find that, city for city, Bombay has probably done equally well, though it is not so apparent to an outsider. But this Bombay family I mentioned is still not happy, in fact, is quite unhappy. They



complain they don't have colour VCRs as their friends have.

Japan, of course, has done much better than India, or, for that matter, any other country in the world. It is now the biggest industrial nation in the world, almost certainly the most aggressive producer of products that have made deep inroads into the markets of Europe and the US. It is not much point in comparing India with it. We are not in the same league.

Q. What about China? Are we in the same league?

A. China has decided to march in the image, for the reason that much of the country is a closed book to us. China has a different political system, one that people have rejected, and you really cannot compare the two.

Q. What would you compare India with then?

A. I wouldn't compare it with any other country. It is unique. It is a country with 700 million people, free people, and you don't find a country anywhere else. Japan is smaller—only about 120 million people—and China is bigger, but I am not sure we can get away with things here that we can in China.

Another point is that the main concern of India's planners or rather political leaders was never growth or development for the sake of development. If you read Jawahar Nehru's speeches in Parliament immediately after we became free, you will find that he rarely talked about development as such. It was to be measured in terms of gross domestic product, or GNP, as we call it. He did not mention the Planning Commission until after that a growth rate of 3.5 per cent was set for development but a rate of 5 per cent was set for the other hand, he and the other leaders stressed on self-reliance, on doing everything for ourselves, from designing steel plants to atomic power stations. To him, and to the other leaders, development was linked with self-reliance, because, as he put it, that is what we need for ourselves. And of what use is our independence if we become slaves again, he asked.

If you take self-reliance or independence as the main aim of development, you will agree that we have achieved a large measure of success. We are now the only developing country in the world excluding perhaps China, that has a large element of self-reliance built into its economy. Not just technology and industry but also finance. We have

stantial savings ratio, something like 22 per cent a year, almost as large as that of Japan. We are also among the top 15 or so industrial countries of the world. And to do this in a span of 30 years is not something that can be brushed aside as irrelevant or material.

Q. But why is it that despite all these plus factors we are still a poor country with some-thing like 40 per cent of our population below the poverty line, and with a quality of life that is quite intolerable?

A. There are many reasons, but the main reason is lack of self-discipline and lack of capacity for organisation. It is easy to put up a steel plant—all you need is good machines and good engineers, and we produce both, up to a point—but very hard to run it profitably, without a capacity for organisation which implies self-discipline. Somehow, as a people, we seem to lack it. We are apparently incapable of organising a modest size convention without shouting or the other going wrong. We can even organise a cricket match without shouting at each other and at the umpire. You don't have such things in, say, Japan, which is one of the most disciplined and orderly societies in the world.

I shall give you an example. I was walking a small street in Tokyo, a narrow street in fact in the heart of the city, at night. There was no traffic at that time of night but the traffic lights were working. There were about 10 people on my side and many on the other waiting to cross over. The lights went green. I was really amazed. Everybody moved, though there was not a car on the road. The more complex a society—and an industrial society is certainly more complex than an agricultural one—the more disciplined you have to be. I have yet to learn this simple lesson.

Secondly, we seem to have completely neglected to take care of the social side of the development process. Development means more schools, more hospitals and more amenities. But the Government has neglected housing completely. For a country of 700 million people, we should plan for half a dozen new towns every year, for our population grows by 12 to 15 million every year, which is almost like adding a new whole Australia every year. We do very little to cater to their housing needs. So, what do we have? We have skyscrapers. The poor live in slums. There are slums in Bombay, with TV sets and refrigerators, for people live there just because they have nowhere else to go. If we can have an effective housing policy, the quality of life would improve enormously as it did in England after the Building Societies Act

came into being. There were slums in London too and Charles Dickens was writing about them in his novels.

Q. But housing is included in our plans, isn't it?

A. Everything is included in our plans, even health is, but just look at our hospitals. In fact, I would suggest that the Government has far too many things on its plate, but, having laid the foundations of an industrial society, it should now say that industry can look after itself and the Government will look after things like housing and town planning, what I would call the social side of the economy. Instead, the Government is apparently still concerned with licensing industry and telling people that you should produce only this much and if you produce more, you will be fined. This is ridiculous—to fine producers in a country that is poor precisely because it doesn't produce enough. The Government should move away from industry and business—these are after all more or less autonomous sectors and don't need government help or patronage any more—into areas where no private sector will venture. We shall then have competition in industry which will be good for industry as well as the consumer. The Government should plan new cities and towns, provide finance for housing and health centres and

generally draw people out of the cities which have become festering slums. People in slums do not starve, but they do feel deprived—deprived of humanness.

Q. Would you do away with centralised planning altogether?

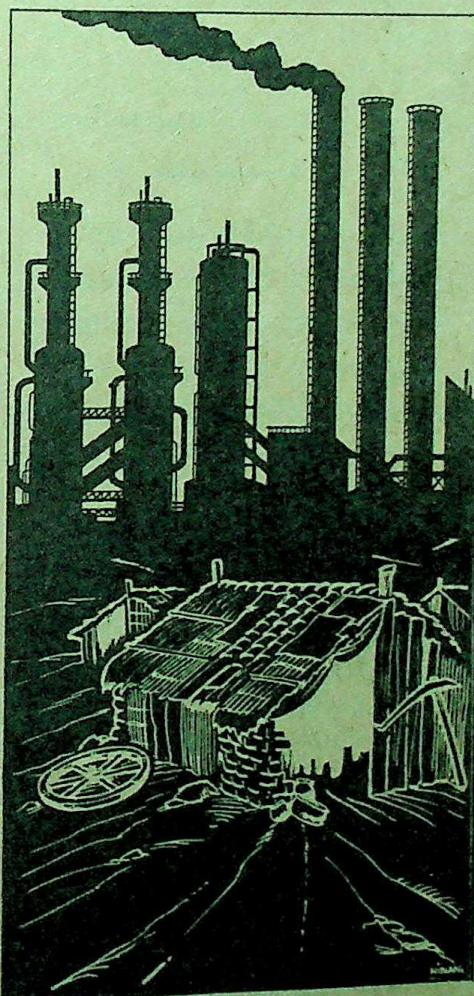
A. No, I wouldn't. I am not one of those who think that everything works out well if you leave it to the private sector. I am not Adam Smith's blind follower. Things were different in his time. But just because we had industrial licensing 30 years ago, it doesn't mean we should continue with it now. After all, there is only so much a government can do, and the time has now come to for it to move to other areas. This is the real role of a government, the role of a watchdog.

I would say that the Government should concentrate on what may be called the external factors of the economy: foreign exchange, petroleum, which we still import, and similar products, and import of technology, up to a point. All internal things should be left free—production, distribution, even pricing, for, if there are no controls on production, you can always ensure that prices are held in check. It is only when you do not produce enough that you are in trouble, and that is why we are in trouble. We are in fact like a huge factory, brand new and gleaming with fresh paint, which has not yet gone into production. We have created this huge industrial apparatus with great effort but for one reason or another we are just not allowing it to perform to capacity, and are holding it back.

Q. There is no conflict then between space satellites and village roads?

A. No inherent conflict. A country like India needs both. Where I think we have gone wrong is in failing to get the most out of both. You should use every resource you have, new or old, as efficiently as possible, whether it is a nylon plant costing Rs 100 crore or a small handloom costing no more than a few thousand rupees. But to argue, as Charan Singh and others do, that we should have no nylon plants at all because they keep the handlooms idle is a sure way to perpetual poverty. One reason why, for instance, the British economy is in such a mess, is that industry over there did not plough enough into modernisation and fell back steadily behind the rest of the world in productivity. In a small world that is getting smaller every day, there are certain compulsions which you just can't ignore.

There is also another thing. We rely so much on the Government for everything from our morning bottle of milk to our evening ride home from the office that we have forgotten that many of these things we can do ourselves. And the day we realise this, we shall have broken the mould of poverty for ever.



DEVELOPMENT

The Indian Experience



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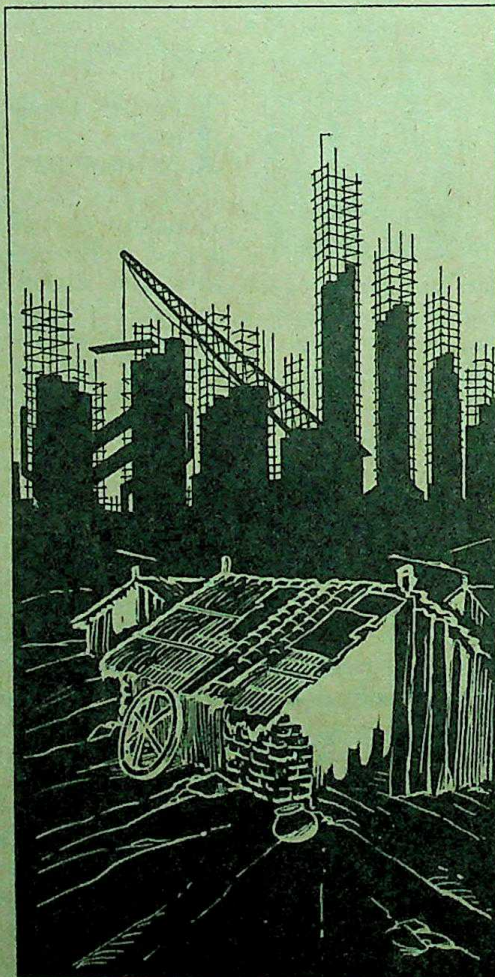
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there is a TV and telephone in every flat. They are not rich people, just middle class professionals with jobs in the Government and private industry, but within one generation, a family that came to Bombay with nothing more than the clothes on their backs is now probably worth more than half a crore of rupees. And there are thousands of such families all over the country, possibly millions. You can't deny that this is progress.

Q. But there is still a feeling that we could have done much better.

A. I agree. Other countries have done much better. Japan, for instance, and Singapore and Hong Kong. I wouldn't however put Singapore and Hong Kong in the same bracket as India, for it is like comparing an elephant with a fly. If you compare, say, Bombay or New Delhi with Singapore, which incidentally has a population of only 20 lakh, you will find that, city for city, Bombay has probably done equally well, though it is not so apparent to an outsider. But this Bombay family I mentioned is still not happy, in fact, is quite unhappy. They



complain they don't have colour VCRs as their friends have.

Japan, of course, has done more than India, or, for that matter, any country in the world. It is now the biggest industrial nation in the world, almost certainly the most aggressive. There are products that have made deep inroads into the markets of Europe and the U.S. It is not much point in comparing with it. We are not in the same league.

Q. What about China? Are we in the same league?

A. China has decided to change its image, for the reason that much of the country is a closed book to us. China has a different political system, one that people have rejected, and you cannot compare the two.

Q. What would you compare India with then?

A. I wouldn't compare it with any country. It is unique. It is a country with 700 million people, free people, and you don't find a country anywhere else. Japan is smaller—only about 120 million people—and China is bigger, but I am not sure we can get away with things here that we can in China.

Another point is that the main aim of India's planners or rather politicians was never growth or development for the sake of development. If you read Nehru's speeches in Parliament immediately after we became free, you will find he rarely talked about development. It was to be measured in terms of gross product, or GNP, as we call it. He decided though the Planning Commission that a growth rate of 3.5 per cent was development but a rate of 5 per cent was the other hand, he and the other leaders stress on self-reliance, on doing things for ourselves, from designing steel plants to atomic power stations. To him, and to other leaders, development was linked with self-reliance, because, as he put it, that is what we need for ourselves. And of what use is our independence if we become slaves again, he asked.

If you take self-reliance or independence as the main aim of development you will agree that we have achieved a large measure of success. We are the only developing country in the world excluding perhaps China, that has a large element of self-reliance in its economy. Not just technology and industry but also finance. We have

stantial savings ratio, something like 22 per cent a year, almost as large as that of Japan. We are also among the top 15 or so industrial countries of the world. And to do this in a span of 30 years is not something that can be brushed aside as irrelevant or colour material.

Q. But why is it that despite all these plus factors we are still a poor country with some 40 per cent of our population below the poverty line, and with a quality of life that is quite intolerable?

A. There are many reasons, but the main reason is lack of self-discipline and lack of capacity for organisation. It is easy to put up a steel plant—all you need is good machines and good engineers, and we produce both, up to a point—but very hard to run profitably, without a capacity for organisation which implies self-discipline. Somehow, as a people, we seem to lack it. We are apparently incapable of organising a modest size convention without shouting or the other going wrong. We can even organise a cricket match without shouting at each other and at the players. You don't have such things in, say, the more orderly societies in the world.

I shall give you an example. I was in a small street in Tokyo, a narrow street in fact in the heart of the city, at night. There was no traffic at that time of night but the traffic lights were working. There were about 10 people on my side and 10 on the other waiting to cross over. The lights went green. I was really amazed. The car moved, though there was not a car on the road. The more complex a society—and an industrial society is certainly more complex than an agricultural one—the more disciplined you have to be. We have yet to learn this simple lesson.

Secondly, we seem to have completely neglected the social side of the development process. Development means more schools, more hospitals and more amenities. But the Government has neglected housing completely. For a country of 700 million people, we should plan for half a dozen new towns every year, for our population grows by 12 to 15 million a new whole Australia every year. We do very little to cater to their housing needs. So, what do we have? We have a few skyscrapers. Please don't think that the poor live in slums. There are slums in Bombay, with TV sets and refrigerators, for people live there just because they have nowhere else to go. If we can have an effective housing policy, the quality of life will improve enormously as it did in England after the Building Societies Act

came into being. There were slums in London too and Charles Dickens was writing about them in his novels.

Q. But housing is included in our plans, isn't it?

A. Everything is included in our plans, even health is, but just look at our hospitals. In fact, I would suggest that the Government has far too many things on its plate, but, having laid the foundations of an industrial society, it should now say that industry can look after itself and the Government will look after things like housing and town planning, what I would call the social side of the economy. Instead, the Government is apparently still concerned with licensing industry and telling people that you should produce only this much and if you produce more, you will be fined. This is ridiculous—to fine producers in a country that is poor precisely because it doesn't produce enough. The Government should move away from industry and business—these are after all more or less autonomous sectors and don't need government help or patronage any more—into areas where no private sector will venture. We shall then have competition in industry which will be good for industry as well as the consumer. The Government should plan new cities and towns, provide finance for housing and health centres and

generally draw people out of the cities which have become festering slums. People in slums do not starve, but they do feel deprived—deprived of humanness.

Q. Would you do away with centralised planning altogether?

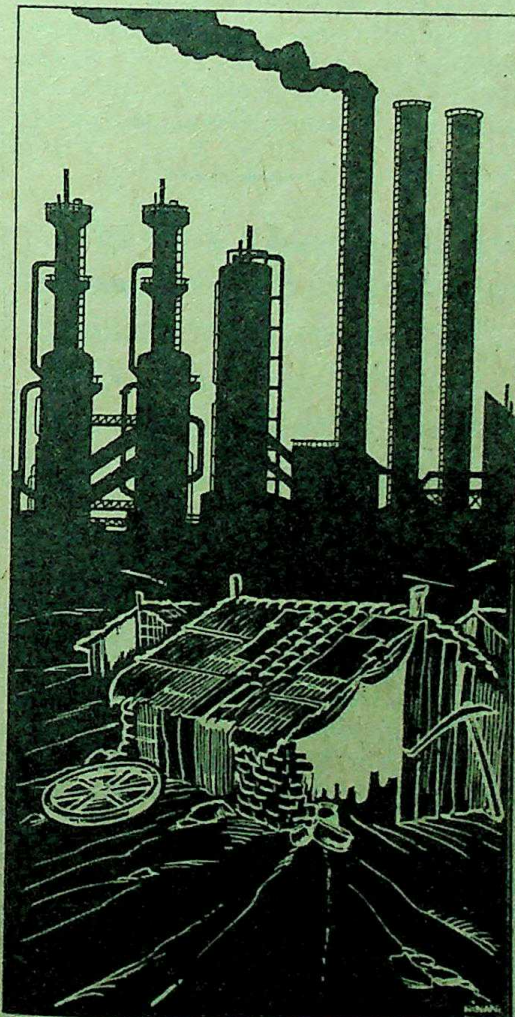
A. No, I wouldn't. I am not one of those who think that everything works out well if you leave it to the private sector. I am not Adam Smith's blind follower. Things were different in his time. But just because we had industrial licensing 30 years ago, it doesn't mean we should continue with it now. After all, there is only so much a government can do, and the time has now come for it to move to other areas. This is the real role of a government, the role of a watchdog.

I would say that the Government should concentrate on what may be called the external factors of the economy: foreign exchange, petroleum, which we still import, and similar products, and import of technology, up to a point. All internal things should be left free—production, distribution, even pricing, for, if there are no controls on production, you can always ensure that prices are held in check. It is only when you do not produce enough that you are in trouble, and that is why we are in trouble. We are in fact like a huge factory, brand new and gleaming with fresh paint, which has not yet gone into production. We have created this huge industrial apparatus with great effort but for one reason or another we are just not allowing it to perform to capacity, and are holding it back.

Q. There is no conflict then between space satellites and village roads?

A. No inherent conflict. A country like India needs both. Where I think we have gone wrong is in failing to get the most out of both. You should use every resource you have, new or old, as efficiently as possible, whether it is a nylon plant costing Rs 100 crore or a small handloom costing no more than a few thousand rupees. But to argue, as Charan Singh and others do, that we should have no nylon plants at all because they keep the handlooms idle is a sure way to perpetual poverty. One reason why, for instance, the British economy is in such a mess, is that industry over there did not plough enough into modernisation and fell back steadily behind the rest of the world in productivity. In a small world that is getting smaller every day, there are certain compulsions which you just can't ignore.

There is also another thing. We rely so much on the Government for everything from our morning bottle of milk to our evening ride home from the office that we have forgotten that many of these things we can do ourselves. And the day we realise this, we shall have broken the mould of poverty for ever.



THE GOVERNMENT

Popularity Poll

ARE THE elections coming? To get an answer, you need to read neither tarot cards nor tea leaves, just the daily newspapers. In a sudden rash of enthusiasm the Government has announced a series of new economic measures that smack suspiciously of trying to win popularity with voters. One day it was a notification granting an ad hoc bonus to Central Government employees, on another the raising of minimum wages for 29 categories of employment in mining, construction and agriculture. On yet a third day, interest rates were lowered on short-term loans to small farmers and truck operators. And on a fourth day there was the sharp cut in excise duties on commodities ranging from tyres to refrigerators and electrical appliances.

These and other official giveaways have been matched by a number of decisions seemingly taken with an eye to popular responses. Giving up a concerted bid to partially impound fresh dearness allowance (DA) instalments by depositing them in provident fund accounts, the Government recently released three fresh DA instalments—to be paid in cash. A proposal to revise the urban land ceiling law was in its advanced stages when, newspaper reports said, the move was pushed back into cold storage because it might affect the ruling party's 'socialist' image. And proposed parliamentary enactments to amend labour and trade union laws—prepared earlier in the teeth of opposition from the organised trade unions—were quietly postponed.

Hurried Measure: In mid-October, the hurried take-over of 13 textile mills in Bombay was clearly pushed through with an eye on the 2.5 lakh textile workers in the city who had just come through a crippling 18-month strike. Bombay Congress(I) boss Murli Deora confessed frankly that he and others had impressed on Mrs Gandhi the desperate need to win back the loyalty of the city's large workforce.

Earlier, in the case of the reduction in excise and customs duties on electronic goods, manufacturers said the initiative had come from Rajiv Gandhi, who had personally presided over meetings attended by industry representatives and Deputy Minister for Electronics, M.S. Sanjeevi Rao. The real objective: a sharp reduction in the price of TV sets, so that Doordarshan's message would reach many more homes. Said Weston Electronics Chairman Prem Vachani: "It was Rajiv Gandhi who was responsible for this

decision." TV manufacturers have little doubt that more extensive election coverage by and greater reach for the officially-controlled media is the reason for the hasty decision, taken a few months ago, to extend television coverage to 70 per cent of the country.

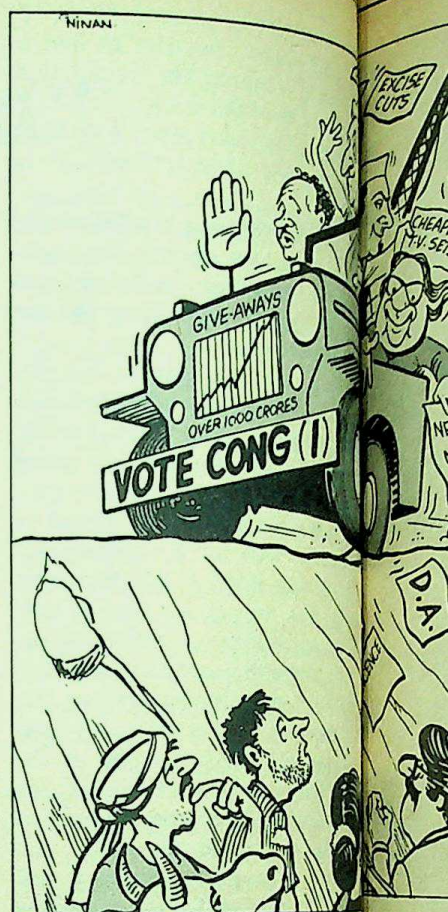
In industrial circles, there is a similar unanimity of opinion about the widespread raids being conducted by the enforcement directorate. Said a drug company executive in Bombay, where most of the raids have been conducted: "In the last few years we have not seen such intensive raiding activity." The suspected reason: a large number of industrialists and traders who are nabbed for various offences can then be let off at a suitable price in the form of contributions to party election coffers. Among those nabbed so far are a leading stainless steel merchant, a real estate agent in Jaipur, and a member of the Kamani family, while in Calcutta the raiding of over 150 investment companies' offices has shaken up the country's eastern industrial capital.

Populist Moves: Among other populist manoeuvres are the liberalisation of pension schemes, the announcement of interim pay hikes for government servants, the hurried (but aborted) effort to push through at least partially a 1980 election promise on aboli-

In a sudden rash of enthusiasm the Government has announced a series of economic measures that smack suspiciously of trying to win popularity with voters.

tion of the sales tax, and a proposal aired by Civil Supplies Minister Bhagwat Jha Azad to make private sector industry supply essential commodities at subsidised prices. Azad also told INDIA TODAY that the Government's decision to import 2.5 million tonnes of wheat and rice in a year of record domestic grain procurement and bumper harvests was in order "to make sure that we do not run into food shortages". Though the minister did not explicitly say so, shortages and high prices are clearly an election talking point that the Government wants to try and avoid giving to the Opposition.

Clearly, the Government's effort has



been to try and reach as many sections of the population as can be reached with such measures. Finance and industry spokesmen, freight handlers, labour, pensioners, the armed forces,

farmers in general, the middle class, the unemployed. The cost of such largesse could well run into over Rs 1,000 crore for many of the giveaways have been expensive: the bonus for government employees will cost Rs 44 crore, the move to slash excise duties on tyres, refrigerators and other items another Rs 100 crore, and the interim relief for government servants over Rs 238 crore. There is the substantial expenditure incurred on extending the TV network to more than Rs 500 crore spent on imports, Rs 195 crore on three instalments, Rs 300 crore this year on employment schemes, and much more.

Inevitably, these have resulted in gaping holes in the Government's accounts, as Finance Minister Mukherjee admitted obliquely during his meeting with economic journalists last week. Railway finances—which are equally tight by the interim reliefs, bonuses and similar decisions—are now officially projected to be in the worst state ever, with a projected surplus of over Rs 300 crore now likely to end up as a deficit of 300 crore.



Faced with similar situations in the finance and railway ministers have not announced mid-year tax imposition, freight hikes, or other measures to increase revenue. Both 1981 and 1982 did of appropriate revenue-raising measures of comparable situations. But this year has not seen anything similar. Said a government spokesman: "We are not making any mid-year budget measures, and my guess is that this is because of the likelihood of elections." TODAY was also told that no relief to general tax proposals were announced either, only announcement of outlays for the rest of the Sixth

Electoral Bonus: The electoral significance of some of the decisions was underlined by the fact that in at least some of the cases the ministers concerned had been opposed to the final decision. Thus, Commerce Minister V.P. Singh was opposed to the textile mill take-over, and Finance Minister Mulherjee indicated during a meeting of the cabinet that he was against giving bonus to government employees because of the heavy demands involved as well as the competition of state governments, municipal corporations and panchayat bodies. Meanwhile, Railway Minister A.B.A. Khan Chaudhury was committing his

organisation to further expenditure: the inauguration of work on a new line between Mathura and Alwar, apparently following lobbying by Congress(I) MP Rajesh Pilot, whose constituency falls in the area. Chaudhury also started work on another new line in his home state, West Bengal, and the combined expenditure on the two new (initially unplanned) projects was estimated last fortnight at Rs 60 crore. In other ministries too, a variety of projects were being suddenly rushed through, with officials at key nodal points reporting pressure for quick clearances of new projects. Clearly, the government was keen to lay as many foundation stones as possible for electoral success.

If this series of government decisions appeared to fit into a pattern, there was also a parallel move to strike a more populist line in official actions, best exemplified by the two employment-oriented schemes announced by Mrs Gandhi on Independence Day. These committed Rs 310 crore of additional expenditure this year, and over Rs 700 crore next year, with the bulk of the funds for the scheme for urban educated unemployed to come from the commercial banks. Discussions with senior officials in a number of banks revealed that they had virtually been steamrolled into the scheme, and many of them saw this as a politically sensitive issue on which they had to give in. Said one senior bank official in Bombay: "We are not supposed to ask for any security; and in a situation where we are fixing targets for lending, irrespective of the viability of the schemes,

The electoral significance of some of the decisions was underlined by the fact that in at least some of the cases the ministers concerned had been opposed to the final decision.

everyone in the bank has doubts as to whether the money will eventually be repaid."

In the majority of cases, the new measures have clearly been designed as populist palliatives rather than as ambitious programmes to solve deep-seated problems. Thus, the educated, unemployed number close to 7 million, but the new self-employment scheme for this category is expected to take care of no more than a couple of lakhs this year. In the case of the rural employment-generating scheme, similar programmes launched in the early 1970s were later officially admitted to have flopped. In the same way, the new railway

works that are being inaugurated may later meet the fate of numerous others that have been languishing for years for want of funds. And if inflation continues unchecked, the Government may well be forced to put a sudden end to its new-found munificence in an effort to curtail spending power.

Many state governments, meanwhile, were adopting equally populist measures, including the postponement or (in the case of Madhya Pradesh) the cancellation of repayment of some of loans to farmers. In Uttar Pradesh, along the lines of the Central take-over of 13 textile mills, the state Government decided to take over 12 sugar mills which were in arrears on payments to cane growers. And in Haryana, the state government acted with unusual haste in releasing new dearness allowance payments to its employees almost immediately after the Central Government led the way. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, who had earlier been opposed to the replacement of sales tax with additional excise duties, also changed his tune following directives from Delhi and a reminder that this was an election promise. Other Congress(I)-ruled states did similar about-turns at the chief ministers' conference in Delhi earlier this month, leaving it to the non-Congress(I) states to stoutly oppose any move to reduce their taxation powers.

Visible Concessions: The message of these measures has started going home in most quarters: both civil servants and industrialists are convinced that the decisions have been taken with an eye to the elections, whenever they are held. And the *Indian Express*, commenting boldly on the decision to grant an ad hoc bonus to government servants, said: "The logic of the... decision... is political rather than economic." Taking up the refrain, the *Economic Times* commented a few days later that "Preparations (for the elections) have already been made in the shape of a massive funding of... programmes. As we advance to the scheduled poll date, 'welfare' measures will no doubt be spewed out in rapid succession."

For all that, however, there's no telling when the elections, due within 14 months in any case, will actually be held. Some of these schemes, including the rural employment scheme (which is slated to get Rs 500 crore next fiscal year compared to Rs 100 crore this year), will reach peak momentum only towards the end of 1984. And, obviously, the Government cannot ignore the reach and influence it will acquire with the extension of television coverage to 70 per cent of the country by late 1984. That alone will be worth all these concessions in electoral terms.

—T.N. NINAN

BUSINESS

CHINA

Leaping Forward

There is greater equality of incomes in rural China than rural India. Right? Wrong.

India has made the mistake of emphasising heavy industry, unlike China which has concentrated its efforts on light industry. Right? Wrong again.


FOR THOSE labouring under conventional notions about the development patterns of India and China, the World Bank's recently released three-volume compendium *China: Socialist Economic Development* is an eye-opener. In more than 1,200 pages of often unknown facts and always fascinating information, the Bank's multi-disciplinary team of experts has, after more than a month of touring China, laid bare the achievements and failures of a complex and repeatedly misunderstood country.

What comes through most clearly is an amazing and probably unsurpassed record of economic growth and social progress. Whether one sees the performance in terms of pure growth rates, or in terms of improving literacy, nutrition and population control, or yet again in terms of sweeping structural changes in the economy, the success is as impressive as the canvas is vast. The report is frequently dotted with comparative references to India, and almost without exception the comparisons are humbling.

China's per capita income has been growing at twice the rate in India (between 2 and 2.5 per cent, against 1 per cent in India), and industrial growth has averaged 13 per cent annually, one of the highest in the world and far above India's 5 per cent. With only 8 per cent of the world's arable land, it has fed 22 per cent of the world's population, without any signs of extreme deprivation. The agricultural growth rate has in fact been no more than India's, at 2.3 per cent, but an equal distribution of food has ensured an absence of the kind of malnutrition evident in the Indian countryside.

Remarkable Success: The record of achievements in other sectors is equally, if not more, impressive. Back in the 1960s, China had an annual population growth rate of 3 per cent—more than India's 2.2 per cent. But by 1979 this had been brought

down with unprecedented rapidity to 1.2 per cent, while India's population continued to grow at the old rate. While India's birth rate inched down marginally from 38 per 1,000 population to 35, China's dropped from around the same level to 18. The World Bank



	INDIA (1950)	CHINA (1952)	INDIA (1980)	CHINA (1980)
COAL (million tonnes)	32.8	66.0	114.0	620.0
CRUDE OIL (million tonnes)	0.25	0.44	10.5	105.9
ELECTRICITY GENERATED (billion kwh)	5.3	7.3	111.6	300.6
STEEL (million tonnes)	1.47	1.35	7.4	37.12
CEMENT (million tonnes)	2.73	2.86	18.4	79.86
CHEMICAL FERTILISERS ('000 tonnes)	18.0	39.0	3,004.0	12,320.0
COTTON CLOTH (billion metres)	4.2	3.83	9.7	13.47
RADIO RECEIVERS ('000 number)	54.0	17.0	1,900.0	30,040.0
BICYCLES ('000 number)	99.0	80.0	4,100.0	13,020.0

Credits by B.K. Sharma

report notes quietly that this is a world record.

In this and other sectors, the record is consistently above the average for developing countries with comparable income levels or in similar stages of development. Take education, where China has a primary school enrolment of 93 per cent, against India's 64 per cent. Moving up to secondary school, China's enrolment is 51 per cent, compared to India's 28 per cent. The drop-out rate in the first four years of schooling is no more than 28 per cent—less than half India's 59 per cent. And most impressive of all, primary enrolment for girls is 84 per cent, against just 50 per cent for India. Adult literacy, not surprisingly, is as high as 66 per cent, almost

double the 36 per cent in India.

Social indicators like these China right out of the general category of Third World countries. Major Third World killers like diarrhoea and child mortality have been virtually eliminated, while equitable food distribution has ensured that though per capita food availability has shown virtually no increase since the 1960s, there is no acute malnutrition. The real unusually high life expectancy of 64 years against 51 in India.

Living Standards:

figures are surprising in the quality of achievement they indicate. Chinese statistics are often unreliable, and have in the past been subject to major distortions. In fact, some of the figures in the World Bank report appear mutually contradictory. But there is little doubt that the Chinese authorities, eager to borrow from the World Bank, have laid out their country to outside eyes for the first time. Other reports with such depth and range of information have been impossible.

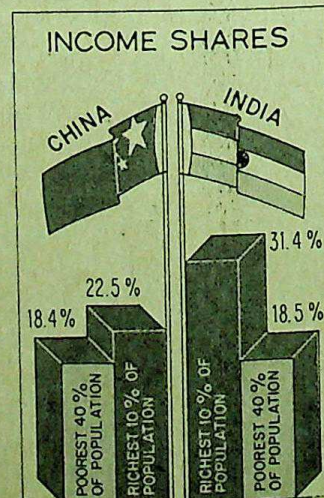
The real surprise is in the figures that tell of income equality, especially in rural China. For a variety of reasons, it appears to be as much more equitable there as in rural India. The poorest 40 per cent of rural people get only 22.5 per cent of total income, exactly the same as in India.

And the top 10 per cent get 22.8 per cent, not significantly more than the 27.6 per cent in India.

In the urban areas, however, the picture is quite different. The poorest 40 per cent of China get a phenomenal 30 per cent of total income, almost twice the 16.9 per cent in India. And the top 10 per cent get only 15.8 per cent against 34.1 per cent in India.

Comfortable Existence

But the figures do not tell the full story, and are somewhat misleading to start with, the poor are ensured their needs at reasonable prices and a fairly effective security system approach take care of those who cannot earn their own living. Equally important, there is no evidence of wide disparities existing





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BUSINESS

in the same community: the income disparities are regional, and caused by poor availability or other natural factors in the poorer parts of the country.

The World Bank report sums it up by saying: "A large minority of the population is very poor. These people, however, have a higher standard of living than those at similar income levels elsewhere. They all work; their food supply is guaranteed; most of their children are at school; and the majority have access to basic health care. Life expectancy... is on average in China outstandingly high." In fact, China's sweeping structural changes in the country—starting with land redistribution, the building up of a new often illiterate but nevertheless effective peasant leadership, then progressing towards cooperative and later collective farming—stand out in sharp contrast to India's farcical efforts at reforms.

THE SOCIAL transformation is matched by the structural change in the economy. For, in a truly outstanding achievement, China has managed to reach a phenomenal level of industrialisation where manufacturing now accounts for half of gross national product. This is almost twice the level in India (27 per cent), which itself is no mean achievement by Third World standards. Once again, this tends to place China in the same league as many middle-income countries. Also, despite its lower per capita income (estimated at 25 to 50 per cent more than India's), that country has been able to invest 31 per cent of its gross domestic product for further growth, higher than the 25 per cent average for middle-income countries.

More than half the total investment has been made in industry, and 80 per cent of it in heavy industry—thus accounting for the four consistently highest industrial growth rates in the world in the last two decades. China is now the world's largest producer of cotton yarn and fabric, the largest manufacturer of radios, the largest producer of coal and cement, the largest manufacturer of steel and the largest generator of electricity.

What makes this record even more amazing is that it has been achieved with one of the lowest rates of urbanisation in the world: only 22 per cent of Chinese live in cities and towns, against 22 per cent in India. In fact, the percentage of urban population to the total has not changed since 1953, achieving the country's goals—industrialisation without urbanisation—achieved largely without restrictions on migration.

What the World Bank report starts out with is that China's two main goals: elimi-

nating the worst aspects of poverty and building a heavy industrial base.

Industrial Inefficiency: The environment in which this was done has, however, left its mark on the current situation. Isolated internationally after the break with the Soviet Union in 1960, China now has an industrial sector that often uses outdated and inefficient machinery and technology that is wasteful in its use of energy as well as other inputs. There has been little improvement in either labour or other yardsticks of productivity, so that increases in output have been achieved essentially by a greater supply of inputs. The capital-output ratio is therefore much higher than what it should be, and much of small industry is in existence not because of its efficiency but because of the stress on local self-sufficiency.

Clearly, changing this and other negative aspects of the system will involve major challenges to policy-makers. Many have already been attempted, including greater

linkages between individual effort and reward, ending some of the price distortions in the system, decentralising some of the decision-making process in order to make it less rigid, and in giving greater priority to improving consumption levels so as to improve living standards. These could well prove hazardous: greater freedom to producers in taking pricing decisions could easily lead to inflation, for instance. And the World Bank recommends hastening slowly.











Human Price: The Bank's report could also be criticised for underplaying the heavy human price that has often been paid for getting to the commanding heights of national performance. It mentions casually that two million technically educated and one million university-educated people went out during the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution; and recent reports have spoken of female infanticide being a rampant phenomenon because of the pressure on families to have only one child (which most parents prefer to be male). Also, in anything other than a totalitarian state it would be impossible to implement the kind of rationing that prevails in China, where couples are allocated their turn in a commune to have children.

The periods of political turmoil—like the decade-long Cultural Revolution—often cost millions of lives, while other experiments like the Great Leap Forward caused economic chaos. Yet others, such as the effort to break up the family, had to be quickly given up. Human suffering in all of these must have been enormous, and must be laid directly at the door of China's political system.

Nevertheless, it is the same political system that has made possible the close integration of the "well-organised multi-level" economic and social system with the political structure of the country, so that basic social services are delivered, directives quickly transmitted to the field level, and mass campaigns launched to reach social and economic goals.

Clearly, numerous challenges now lie ahead of China: a basic need to improve living standards, to modernise laggard sectors of the economy, to tackle the severe housing shortage, to combat a coming energy crunch when the oil surpluses run out, to graduate towards a more open economy that can improve on export performance, and much more. But if the figures are to be believed and the human cost ignored, the World Bank report leaves little room for doubt that China's performance through three decades of social and economic progress—given the scale of effort and the magnitude of achievement—is without parallel anywhere.

—T.N. NINAN

	INDIA	CHINA
		
BIRTH RATE (per 1000) 	35	18
DEATH RATE (per 1000) 	14	6
POPULATION GROWTH RATE (%) 	2.1%	1.2%
PRODUCTION STRUCTURE (% of GDP)		
AGRICULTURE 	38%	31%
INDUSTRY 	27%	47%
SERVICES 	35%	22%
ANNUAL GROWTH OF PER CAPITA INCOME 	1.4%	2.7%
SHARE OF INVESTMENT IN GDP (%) 	24%	31%

BUSINESS

OBRA POWER STATION

Burnt Out Case

THERE was no sense of panic at the Obra thermal power station when the fire alarm was sounded in the afternoon of October 30. The fire brigade, housed adjacent to the main plant, also viewed it as a routine call, for fire was a common occurrence. But within two hours it was common knowledge all over the state that an unprecedented fire had reduced half of the giant Obra plant to ashes. The plant, among the biggest in Asia, had accounted for 60 per cent of the state's power supply. The fire, incomparable to any others in terms of the financial disaster it brought in its wake, has shattered the economy of the state.

The fire raged for over 48 hours, plunging the entire state into darkness for two days, and then forced the Government to impose an unannounced power cut ranging from 40 to 80 per cent on the industrial sector and in most of the districts. Only some important district headquarters and the state capital were spared. Industries in

Ghaziabad and Kanpur particularly are getting power for not more than six hours a day. Talking to INDIA TODAY, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Sripat Misra, said: "The picture is quite gloomy if we look at it in its totality."

Massive Loss: The fire in Unit B, built at a cost of Rs 1,000 crore, completely destroyed two units of 200 mw each (Number 10 and 11) and seriously damaged the remaining three (Number 9, 12 and 13). Owing to a switching off of the alternate and direct currents (AC and DC), the rotors of the turbines of two of the three machines have broken down because, says an expert, "the rotors should be supplied current for at least 36 hours after the shut-down." Besides the loss of machines and equipment worth over Rs 150 crore, the state, according to conservative estimates, is likely to suffer a recurring revenue loss of more than a staggering Rs 300 crore every year for at least five years to come.

Two major power generation projects at Anpara (Mirzapur district) and Tanda (Fai-

zabad district) have been shelved "in the immediate effect", as funds earmarked for them have been diverted for the re-erection of the Obra plant. Equipment from the Anpara plant, which was due to start generating in October 1984, is being shifted to Obra. Commissioning of the project is subject to the availability of funds and we are not looking at any at the moment," admitted S.S. Misra, a member (generation) of the Uttar Pradesh State Electricity Board, indicating that the crisis might have far-reaching repercussions.

Officials admit the power crisis is likely to become worse by December and January when the agricultural sector's demand for power will increase as the rabi crop sowing gets under way. Foreseeing a crisis, Misra at a meeting of senior officials on November 6, said all possible measures should be taken to ensure power supply. But he is forgetting that the combined generation of all thermal and hydel projects in the state is less than 1,000 mw, whereas the peak demand now is 1,850 mw, and likely to rise to 2,300 mw in December. The 20 to 25 per cent power supplied for nearly a week after the Obra fire by Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh has now been

CIGARETTES

Charmed Life

FOR MILLIONS of smokers familiar with the best-selling Charminar, the new name had appeal: Charms. The packaging was right too: a denim 'soft-top' that identified with the jean generation. The ads were perfect: boy and bare-shouldered girl, a guitar, in some cases a motorcycle; the copy-line put the thought into words: a "spirit of freedom".

The smoke was just it: not strong, not mild, and smooth enough to pass the average smoker's test. The price was also right: middle-range, available at Rs 4 for a packet of 20. Even if Vazir Sultan Tobacco (VST) Company's product development and marketing team wanted to put a finger wrong, it probably couldn't have.

Result: the most sensational cigarette launch in the history of the country's tobacco industry. From monthly sales of 15 million in March-April, the figure rose to 70 million in May-June and an awe-inspiring 165 million in July-August. In less than six months, the new cigarette had become the country's largest selling king size filter brand.

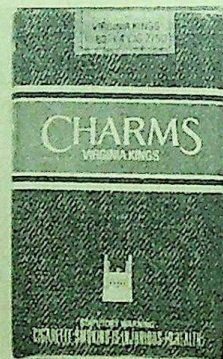
That's when the rumours first started, in Calcutta: Charms' acetate filter tip caused cancer and leucoderma. Sales on

the Jadavpur university campus, on Calcutta's southern fringes, dropped overnight from 2,000 a day to zero. Presidency College followed suit, as did other parts of the city. Then the rumour spread to Delhi and the northern region.

As the climbing sales curve levelled off abruptly, VST stopped fretting about the source of the rumours and turned its attention to rescuing the new goldmine.

Marketing director B.P. Singh issued a new series of advertisements pointing out that the filter was imported, and that other leading brands used the same filter (which is in fact better than cheaper cellulose substitutes).

Damage Contained: By early November, the damage had been contained and sales climbed rapidly to a monthly rate of 225 million in early November. Company chairman K.K. Pillai predicted that this would be 325 million by the year-end. That will make Charms the product sensation of 1983. Sales are already over 50 per cent more than that of any other king sized filter. Rival company spokesmen concede ruefully that Charms has knocked "every other filter brand in the universe"—barring Wills Navy Cut, which has a strong brand loyalty among



Packaging a lifestyle

the more conservative, middle-age smokers. But Charms is certain to overtake them in the coming months and become the single biggest seller among all filter cigarettes—king size or otherwise.

As rival companies plan new brands to try and stop Charms' sweep, there is little doubt that a new chapter has begun in Indian cigarette marketing. For Charms is the first Indian

cigarette to achieve such complete success in selling not product attributes (strength or smoothness) but lifestyle. Companies abroad have done this for a long time, best exemplified by Marlboro's cowboy campaign. VST chose the jeans lifestyle to attract young smokers; but in eloquent testimony to the penetration of denim culture, Charms appealed across the geriatric spectrum, and—still bigger wonder—to all income groups. Smokers switched over from other brands in the same price range, from more expensive cigarettes, and from cheaper brands as well—a unique form of equalising the market. Pillai now terms the "socialisation of smoking".

In cigarette marketing, at least, socialism and the spirit of freedom seem a winning combination.



OCM

SUITINGS

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Pure Wool, 'Terene'/Wool, SZ,
70/30, Millionaire, Tweeds

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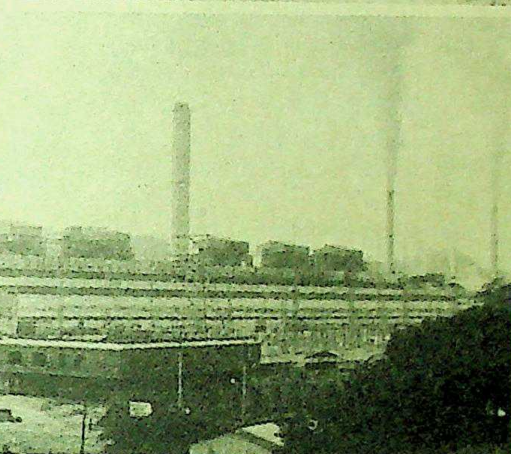
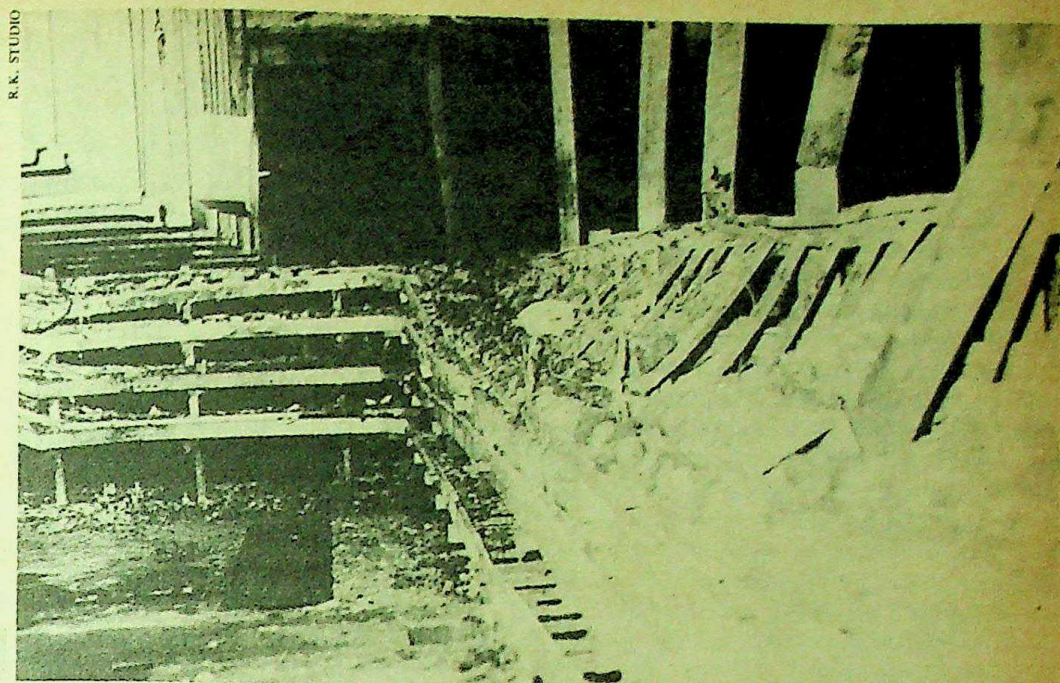
INNESS

following 'local increase in demand'. The picture is indeed gloomy and the 250 mw power, from the National Thermal Power Corporation plant in Singrauli (Madhya Pradesh), is hardly likely to solve the problem.

Recurring Feature: The chief minister's statement that the Obra fire was an accident that could have occurred in any plant does not hold good in view of the established fact that the fire in this plant, supplied by the Central Heavy Electricals Limited, was more than a monthly affair. Unit A survived in the end after the conveyor belt had caught fire. The other units were extinguished in five hours. The unit only partially damaged. In the past this year there was a similar fire in Unit B. The last fire was on October 8, days before the final devastation, when flames spread from one of the galleries of Unit B. It was controlled within an hour and then forgotten.

Investigations reveal that the fire on October 30 may have originated in the room and cable gallery of machine Number 10 in Unit B. According to two engineers who claim to be eyewitnesses but prefer to remain unidentified, a layer of high-speed oil spread on the open floor of the boiler room caught a spark and started the fire. They believe the oil leaked from the pipe connected to the

oil-firing. The engineers said that the boiler was pressurised to a dangerous level during combustion. They presume that the expansion doors were not opened to ease the pressure, one of the doors was open and ignited the oil on the floor. A senior official of the electricity board admitted with an on-the-spot inquiry that the theory of a spark but rejected the idea that the expansion door had opened. He also ruled out another theory of a short-circuit in the cable gallery. "In such cases the cable with a short-circuit is automatically isolated and the way it did in a matter of minutes, the cables are isolated," he said. Member, P.W.D., Misra, who also visited the spot, was convinced by the fact that the fire spread horizontally and not vertically as it should do in the case of a short-circuit. "The fire seems to have covered a large area of the plant before it actually started," he said. The fire-fighting brigade at the plant cannot be blamed for as Misra admitted. "No fire like the one in Obra can be con-



The power station before and after the fire

trolled by any fire-fighting equipment in the world. You can only try to control it and that is all you can do."

Sabotage Charge: Though the main characters involved deny all allegations, the question of sabotage cannot be ruled out. The chairman of the board, S.K. Sanyal, the managing director of the Uttar Pradesh Power Generation Corporation, Mathura Rai, and the present general manager of Obra, K.B. Mathur, had been locked in a cold war till recently. It all started when Rai, who was occupying the senior post of secretary to the board, was 'shunted off' to Obra as the general manager. During his tenure in Obra, where he had worked in the same capacity prior to his appointment as secretary, he faced insubordination from a group of officials said to be in close league with the chairman. Rai reportedly raised his own 'army' of officials in order to combat the insubordinate subordinates. A vigilance enquiry was instituted against Rai for his 'arbitrary attitude' towards a section of officials in Obra. Finally Rai was transferred from Obra on July 31, this year. Mathur replaced

him and then followed mass transfers of officials said to be belonging to Rai's camp. More than 20 assistant engineers have been removed from Obra during the last three months. So, was the fire caused by disgruntled officials wanting to spite their rivals?

Expensive Repairs: A team of technical experts in their preliminary report estimate that it will need an investment of over Rs 200 crore to make Obra function again. They have concluded that it would take a year to commission the partially damaged machines and a minimum of two years for machines Number 10 and 11. Even these schedules depend on the job being given top priority. Chairman Sanyal, on the other hand, estimates repair costs at Rs 30 crore and feels the plant will be ready for generation within a year. The experts might be closer to the truth, for after a similar fire which had gutted Unit A of the smaller Harduaganj thermal plant in 1979, the board has only managed to repair one of the three 30 mw machines so far. Assuming that Obra will remain out of commission for a year, the board will suffer a revenue loss of over Rs 300 crore. In order to compensate for the loss of power from Obra, the water reserves of the Rihand reservoir (Mirzapur) are being used to generate extra hydel power. The Rihand hydel plant with an installed capacity of 300 mw had a water level of 851.9 feet on November 7, whereas it was well over 860 feet during the same period last year. If the reservoir is used to generate 3 million units per day, as it has been doing after the collapse of Obra, the water reserves will last for just over three months, for it is now left with a total generation capacity of 288 million units. Though even the present position is critical, the figures leave little room for doubt that there is worse to come.

CALCUTTA

Murder In The Mill

THE LAST six years of Marxist rule in West Bengal have been generally free from the violent union activity of the previous brief spells of Marxist rule in 1967 and 1969. But last fortnight this record was bloodied as a group of workers belonging to the Angus Jute Mill went berserk and murdered their manager Amal Bose in full view of hundreds of others. The murder was the culmination of a two-hour long violent demonstration within the mill compound, during which no senior union leader tried to restrain them. Nor did the police think it necessary to intervene even though they had been informed and even though the police station is barely a kilometre away from the mill.

The ghastly incident took place on November 1, the fortnightly pay-day at Angus, a 50-year-old jute mill and one of four owned by Calcutta's Thomas Duff and Company. The fortnightly wage bill for 7,000 workers is Rs 14 lakh and the money often does not reach in time from the head office in Calcutta. This was what happened on that fateful day when Bose went to his office to find that only about Rs 5 lakh had reached from Calcutta.

Growing Anger: He immediately called leaders of the six trade unions which operate in the mill (including the Marxist-dominated CITU and INTUC) and told them that payment would be made in the evening by when he expected the full amount to reach the mill at Bhadreswar, about 40 km from Calcutta. Around 3.30 in the afternoon, however, word reached him that because of some trouble with the bank the head office would not be able to make the money available before the next day and he asked his personnel officer to inform the workers.

But as word spread that there would be no payment that day, work at the mill came to a halt and in no time about 500 workers assembled outside the manager's office demanding payment. According to the FIR lodged with the police, they were led by two young and firebrand leaders, Jogindra Singh and Zainul Haq, both employees and members of CITU.

Sensing trouble, Assistant Manager K.L. Pancholi and some other officers, like Assistant Personnel Officer R.C. Samal and Cashier V. Thakur, who were present in Bose's office, sent for Gul Mohammed, leader of the INTUC union, hoping he would be able to restore order. But, as Pancholi recounted later: "Gul Mohammed came but perhaps seeing that his rival CITU leaders

were carrying the day, also joined them and seeking to outbid them made even stronger speeches."

By then it was around 4 p.m., and the speeches were having their effect. Bose, who had been manager at Angus for the last four years and enjoyed good rapport with the workers, stepped out to the verandah of his



Bose (top) and his ransacked office: orgy of violence

office to pacify them. What followed were brickbats and even as he retreated into the room the crowd managed to break off one of the iron grilles, that protected the verandah from the compound and swarmed in, not accompanied by any of the three leaders, Jogindra Singh, Zainul Haq or Gul Mohammed, who had all left after inciting the workers.

It was then that all hell was let

loose. While one group of workers set up furniture and the telephone at Rs 150,000 from the cash box in the cashier's office, another group chased officers from the room to another and them up with iron rods and sticks.

The workers made it clear they were gunning only for Bose and repeated their out to the other officers and repeated cause they were after the manager. Bose was bleeding profusely from the head received on his face but as K.L. Pancholi later recalled with admiration:

remarkable that even then, he kept our cool, reminding us that one of the hazards of our profession is obviously thinking that the security would not continue for long."

It did not continue for long. At 5.30 p.m. Santosh Chatterjee, a clerk and also a prominent communist who had all along been with the workers and getting beaten up with them, unconscious on the floor. By then Pancholi and Thakur had also been dragged out into the compound by the workers and warned to stay away. Only Bose and Samal remained with Bose who came to their arms as they tried to strike him with little success. Soon the workers managed to isolate Bose; recounting "With an iron rod pressed close to his throat. I saw helplessly as they threw him out into the open. Soon I heard thumping noises and minutes later the workers ran away we found Bose dead with deep stab wounds and his eyes gouged out."

That was when the police arrived. They later said that they needed to muster their forces, but what was equally strange was that no help came from either the Lagan Jute Manufacturing Company or the Angus factory situated within a few miles of the mill. In fact, the workers share the same compound as the mill.

Aftermath: As the shocking news spread, the trade unions began to spread each other. The Chamidani localities of the CPI(M), which looks after the Bhadreswar area, issued a public statement condemning the murder, the police inaction and alleging that it was a part of a conspiracy to tarnish the workers in general. The fact that the own leaders, Santosh Chatterjee, had been grievously hurt caused the claim that their men were not in the area.

However, there is no denying that two CITU leaders had addressed the workers and asked about the Sinha, another prominent CITU leader in the locality said: "Some people addressed the workers but that day

as they MARKETS

The Swing

THE MARKETS are swinging again, but not at the end of the rope, as many expected them to. For reasons none can put their fingers on, they seem to have made an about turn, and started marching in a totally unexpected direction. The stockbroker said: "Absence of bad news as if that was explanation enough. Apparently it is. There is always good and bad news but while good news does not necessarily cheer up the market men, the absence of bad news can. The market took a sudden discovery of textile mills in Bombay in its stride, although it was obviously not to its advantage and was waiting for some more but it has evidently gone round that this was an exceptional step and would not be repeated. Politics is after all politics and politicians have to play their little games, particularly when elections are on the cards. But businessmen can also play games of their own kind and the markets have a sixth sense about what game is being played when and how. Two things have cheered up the market

Quay Sera Sera

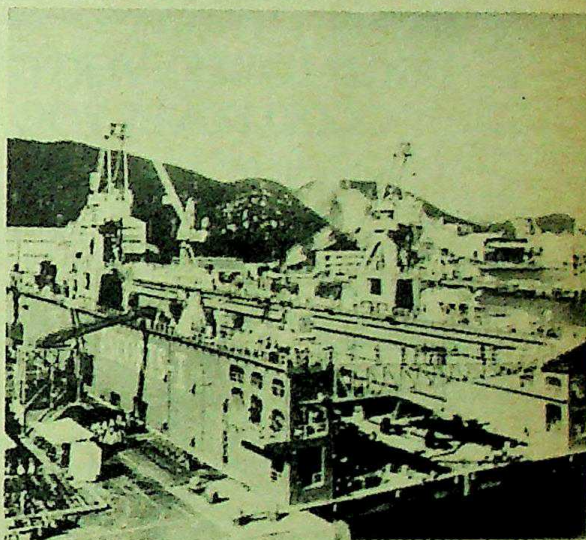
On the one hand, you had Escorts Chairman H.P. Nanda proudly flying off to Japan to take delivery of his new acquisition, named Escorts-1, on October 6. Within a few days of that, the dock duly left Japanese waters on the long voyage to its appointed home off Elephanta Island. But, on the other hand, unknown to Nanda, the board of directors of the Nhava-Sheva Port Trust (NSPT) had already met in Bombay and decided that Escorts-1 could not be parked off Elephanta Island after all. In a cryptic one-paragraph letter shorn of all niceties, the port trust informed the company that "having regard to the limited water area available within the port, no water area could be committed for the location of floating dry docks." In short, even as Escorts-1 was being tugged through unexpectedly rough waters in the South China Sea, it faced the prospect of even rougher water at home.

Asked an incensed Rear-Admiral Krishan Dev, the Escorts official in charge of the project, when contacted by newsmen: "Do you think a project of such magnitude would have been undertaken without obtaining permission from the proper authority?"

The answer, oddly enough, was not as cut and dry as the rhetorical question might suggest. Escorts had gone ahead with the project on the basis of informal understandings, but without getting a specific written commitment from port

Complex Problem: But, despite the abundant circumstantial strength of all this evidence, that crucial piece of paper from the port authorities, committing the site to the new dock, was not there. To make matters more complicated, the NSPT was created only recently. Escorts had conducted its negotiations with the agency earlier in charge of the area, the Bombay Port Trust. And the new port trust had decided the dock would come in the way of its plans to develop the port.

For once, the wheels of government



Escorts' new floating dry dock: temporary reprieve

Said a relieved Nanda soon after he emerged with the reprieve: "Our floating dry dock will now be a milestone rather than a millstone."

—T.N. NINAN

ETERNAL LIFE

GOOD NEWS !

YES ! YOU CAN HAVE ETERNAL LIFE ! HOW ? BY READING THIS MESSAGE AND BELIEVING IT ! IT TELLS ABOUT THE ONLY TRUE AND LIVING GOD :- THE GOD WHO CREATED US ! "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth." "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them." (Bible)

God says: "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me." "I have made the Earth, and created man upon it." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the Earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Bible) GOD IS A "HOLY GOD !" WE HAVE ALL SINNED AGAINST GOD ! - AND MUST DIE ! - — — — AND GO TO HELL FOREVER ! — UNLESS WE REPENT OF OUR SINS AND OBEY GOD ! The Bible says : "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "There is none righteous, no, not one." "The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

GOD LOVES EVERYONE ! GOD LOVES YOU !

"GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (JESUS CHRIST) THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE." "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Yes, God wants everyone to have eternal life ! (Bible)

God has provided His plan for you to have eternal life ! Listen to His plan: Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, came down from heaven about 1983 years ago, to make an atonement to God, for your sins, and for the sins of everyone who has ever lived, if you will only repent of your sins, and believe in Him as your Saviour and Lord ! He shed His Holy Blood for you, as an atonement for your sins, so that you might not perish and go to hell, but that you can now have eternal life ! Listen to some of the words of Christ, while He was on earth:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life." "I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE: HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE." "HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED: BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED."

WARNING !

EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ACCEPT GOD'S PLAN FOR THEIR SALVATION WILL HAVE TO SPEND ETERNITY IN HELL ! — IN THE LAKE OF FIRE ! The Bible describes the place of future punishment for all sinners and unbelievers to be: "A lake of fire !" — "A place of torment !" — "A place where lost souls never die and the fire is not quenched !" — "A place of weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth !" — "A place where sinners drink of the wine of God's wrath !" — "A place where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever !" There is no water in hell ! — no joy or happiness ! — no hope of ever getting out ! Precious reader: remember that God loves you ! He does not want you to go to hell, but, in His justice and holiness, He must send you there, if you do not obey Him ! God is a "God of wrath" as well as a "God of love !" His wrath will be upon everyone, who, does not accept His plan for their

salvation ! JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND DIED A HORRIBLE DEATH ON THE CROSS OF CALVARY, IN JERUSALEM, FOR YOU, AS AN ATONEMENT TO GOD FOR ALL OF YOUR SINS, IF YOU WILL ONLY BELIEVE IN HIM AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOUR !

LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ came to this earth about 1983 years ago. He was conceived in a virgin by the Holy Spirit of God, and was born in Bethlehem, of Judea (Israel). All calendars of the whole world are based on His birth ! He is the only person who ever was born without a human father ! Almighty God was His Father ! His blood was holy, without sin ! He lived a sinless life ! While on earth He did many miracles that only God can do ! He raised the dead, healed the sick, the blind, the lepers, and all who came to Him in faith ! He taught us about heaven, hell, about God, His Father, and how we all can have eternal life, by believing in Him ! At the age of 33 He was crucified by sinners and unbelievers, in accordance with the plan of God ! He died on the cross of Calvary, shedding His precious Holy Blood for our sins ! He took upon Himself the sins of the whole world and made an atonement to God, His Father, for the sins of every person, who will repent of their sins, and believe on Him as their Saviour and Lord !

As the prophets of God had foretold, and as Jesus Himself had foretold, He was buried, but arose from the dead in three days, having been victorious over death, hell and the grave ! He came victorious from the grave, over Satan and all the powers of darkness, who are trying to damn every soul on earth ! He is the only person who has ever risen from the dead in a glorified body !

He stayed on earth for 40 days after His resurrection, being seen by hundreds of people, as well as His disciples. He instructed them. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," — "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." He ascended back into heaven, visibly seen, from the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem. Today, He is in heaven, with Almighty God, His Father ! — ready to forgive you of your sins, if you will repent of them, and believe in Him as your Saviour and Lord !

Before returning to heaven, He promised that He would return to earth, and He gave signs as to when He would come back. These signs are now being fulfilled, proving that He is coming back to earth soon, "In the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;" with His holy angels, to rapture all true Christians into heaven, then to judge the world ! It will be too late then for you to believe in Him ! Do it today ! THE BIBLE SAYS: "BEHOLD HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS, AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM: AND ALL KINDREDS OF THE EARTH SHALL WAIL BECAUSE OF HIM." PLEASE BELIEVE IN HIM TODAY ! "PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD !"

This ad has been paid for by Christians who love you ! We want you to have eternal life ! — By believing on The Lord Jesus Christ, as your Saviour and Lord ! Write to, Bible Studies, P.O. Box No. 9132, Bombay 400 025 for a FREE BOOK on the life of Lord Jesus Christ, and other Christian Literature. May God bless you !

To, Bible Studies, P.O. Box No. 9132, Bombay 400 025

NAME

ADDRESS

STATE

PIN

BUSINESS

ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low	Close 3.11.83	Change on Fortnight
Sarabhai	17.75	12.25	12.50	0.25
Layland	37.65	29.50	32.00	nil
Pilots	42.50	29.00	42.00	(0.50)
Cement	461.50	325.00	401.50	(6.50)
Copco	31.00	25.00	28.50	nil
Asto	1,800.00	990.00	1,570.00	40.00
Rayon	48.00	37.40	44.50	(0.30)
Rayon	312.00	210.00	263.00	(30.00)
Rayon	32.60	18.05	31.60	nil
Rayon	62.20	46.10	62.20	7.10
Rayon	74.50	38.00	41.50	(6.00)
Rayon	96.00	57.50	64.00	(4.00)
Rayon	36.45	23.75	27.75	nil
Rayon	34.70	26.00	32.70	(0.10)
Rayon	247.00	135.00	152.00	17.00
Rayon	285.00	195.00	250.00	15.00
Rayon	890.00	695.00	865.00	2.50
Rayon	67.65	45.00	46.25	(0.25)
Rayon	99.00	84.00	96.00	4.00
Rayon	105.50	32.31	84.00	(7.62)
Rayon	207.00	135.00	200.00	(7.00)
Rayon	28.40	20.00	24.00	0.25
Rayon	29.00	20.00	26.75	0.50
Rayon	5.00	29.00	34.00	0.50
Rayon	82.87	39.75	61.75	0.50
Rayon	91.50	50.50	61.75	(0.50)
Rayon	31.50	20.00	22.50	0.15
Rayon	29.00	17.00	21.00	1.00
Rayon	23.00	18.00	23.00	2.80
Rayon	52.00	44.00	51.75	3.25
Rayon	46.60	32.10	46.60	0.80
Rayon	36.86	26.40	36.60	1.86
Rayon	25.10	16.25	24.75	(0.05)
Rayon	27.70	22.00	27.30	0.80
Rayon	35.00	25.50	30.00	1.00
Rayon	36.50	30.40	36.50	0.50
Rayon	86.00	62.50	71.00	8.50
Rayon	44.85	31.50	35.00	0.15
Rayon	41.40	20.35	41.40	7.65
Rayon	57.50	32.00	47.80	4.00
Rayon	92.50	70.00	92.50	9.50
Rayon	68.10	55.80	58.50	0.90
Rayon	28.00	13.25	25.00	0.50
Rayon	25.25	16.25	22.50	(0.50)
Rayon	73.00	52.00	73.00	2.50
Rayon	27.30	14.00	25.50	(0.90)
Rayon	90.00	40.00	84.00	3.50
Rayon	23.25	15.30	21.75	(1.25)
Rayon	66.00	42.00	59.00	(0.50)
Rayon	35.37	22.69	25.50	(0.50)
Rayon	292.50	220.00	230.00	7.50
Rayon	55.00	36.00	55.00	0.50
Rayon	207.50	156.25	161.25	5.00
Rayon	51.00	40.20	49.00	2.20
Rayon	376.00	229.00	246.00	12.00
Rayon	46.00	36.00	40.50	(4.00)
Rayon	65.00	36.50	60.00	(1.00)
Rayon	183.00	100.00	105.00	4.00
Rayon	33.75	19.00	33.62	0.62
Rayon	44.00	22.20	43.30	(0.30)
Rayon	41.50	27.75	32.75	1.75
Rayon	28.25	15.25	25.00	nil
Rayon	48.00	38.30	46.50	1.50
Rayon	322.50	49.50	59.00	4.50
Rayon	455.00	234.50	265.50	31.00
Rayon	59.00	350.00	403.00	49.00
Rayon	19.05	38.00	56.00	2.00
Rayon	25.75	16.00	18.90	(0.15)
Rayon	26.50	21.50	23.50	nil
Rayon	365.00	22.00	23.50	nil
Rayon	23.00	262.00	327.00	(25.00)
Rayon	35.65	15.00	23.00	2.00
Rayon	14.10	22.40	35.65	1.05
Rayon		12.25	13.30	0.20

First, the Government seems to think that this is going to be one of those bumper years, as far as the foodgrains are concerned, and the figures mentioned vary from a low of 140 million tonnes—a record in itself—to 145 million tonnes which could make the current year a jumbo foodgrain year. Second, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee admitted recently that inflation was here to stay and neither he, meaning his government, nor anybody else could do anything about it. The finance minister's statement is a welcome admission that the Government has no intention to curb prices. No wonder, the share prices jumped a full scale, triggering off a mini-boom.

Optimistic Outlook: Even otherwise things are not too bad. Industrial production is picking up, even in those sectors like trucks, tractors etc which came under a credit crunch not so long ago. Engineering companies are looking up, with scrips like Guest Keen Williams touching levels that are very close to the year's high. Aluminium shares, once in the doldrums, are also beginning to look up and so are some synthetics shares.

Companies with a stake in cement, and there are quite a few of those on the ground, are doing well; Birla Jute touched the year's high last week. In fact, most Calcutta-based companies seem to be suddenly up and doing, as if they had decided to get down to it after all. The Dalal Street bulls are still rather penned in but it is only a matter of time before they too break through the barricade.

Most speculators think that the long bear phase is over and the market will be on the way up right until December when it will pause for a breather, sniffing around the political dens. Will there be a poll or no?—that question would decide its next phase. Even otherwise, January is not the best of months, what with the coming budget beginning to cast its shadow across the bottom line. The poll, or rather speculation about the poll, would further add to the uncertainty. Right now, opinion is divided, though going by the ruling party's much publicised session in Bombay, a spring poll cannot be ruled out. While, therefore, the long-term outlook is anything but certain, the markets will be on a good wicket until about early January when the political wheels will start whirring again.

Meanwhile, keep an eye peeled for unusual ups and downs, mostly the former, for that means unusual activity in the board room. Shares that have suddenly gained weight in the last few weeks, if not days, include Jayshree Tea, Indian Explosives, Indian Oxygen, Remington Rand, Shaw Wallace, Zuari Agro, and, of course, that old high flyer, Colgate. They probably know something we don't, but whatever it is, it might not be a bad idea to find out.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates (Rs)	TT Buying Rates (Rs)
Australia	1 As \$	9.4799	9.3799
Austria	100 As Sch	55.2149	54.6382
Bahrain	1 Dinar	27.5926	27.3142
Bangladesh	100 Taka	41.5141	41.2031
Canada	1 Can \$	8.4264	8.3417
Denmark	1 D Kr	1.0797	1.0676
Egypt	1 Egp £	12.2335	12.1418
France	1 Fr Frc	1.2836	1.2406
Hong Kong	1 HK \$	1.3328	1.3195
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0354	1.0277
Iran	100 Rial	11.9536	11.8456
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6414	0.6348
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.9345	4.3468
Kenya	1 K Shilling	0.7732	0.7628
Kuwait	1 Dinar	35.6373	35.5962
Malaysia	1 MI \$	4.6340	4.3873
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.8575	0.8511
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.7103	0.7050
Netherlands	1 D Glds	3.4641	3.4290
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.8019	0.7746
Singapore	1 Sing. \$	4.8739	4.8200
Spain	100 Sp Pt	6.7224	6.6530
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4288	0.4191
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.3214	1.3061
Switzerland	1 Sw Frc	4.7795	4.7301
Tanzania	1 T. Sch	0.8412	0.8349
Thailand	100 Baht	45.1406	44.4554
UK	1 Pound	15.4381	15.2987
USA	1 US \$	10.4000	10.2600
UAE	1 Dirham	2.7748	2.7540
USSR	1 Rouble	13.7088	13.6061
W. Germany	1 DM	3.8910	3.7735

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd. New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on November 8, 1983.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index*		
November 1, 1983	273.6	0.9
Cereals	249.2	(2.3)
Chemicals	323.3	(14.5)
Industrial Fibres	183.3	(6.1)
Metals	372.1	(0.6)
Sugar	193.0	(5.5)
Textile Yarn	219.9	(0.5)
Vegetable Oils	343.3	(7.6)

Gold, standard,		
November 3, 1983	1,860.00	35.00
(Rs per 10 gm)		
Silver, .999		
November 3, 1983	3,660.00	10.00
(Rs per kg)		

SHARES

ET Share Price Index*		
November 3, 1983	271.7	1.2
Cement	251.3	(19.1)
Chemicals	209.9	3.7
Engineering	470.1	5.8
Fertilisers	235.7	11.3
Man-made Fibres	439.5	24.6
Paper	517.0	(3.0)
Rubber Goods	174.0	(0.7)

MONEY

(per cent)

Money Supply, October 6, 1983	0.2
Bank Deposits	0.4
Foreign Exchange Assets	(6.1)

* 1969-70 = 100

GRENADE

Apocalypso Now



THE CONQUISTADOR in the White House is a-whooping and a-hollerin' with joy that his invasion of Grenada has prevented a Caribbean tourist resort from becoming an armed communist haven and has made the rest of the world safe for hypocrisy. While most of the world—the United Nations, the Organisation of American States, and even most NATO countries—have condemned the American blitzkrieg on a mouse that did not roar and barely even squeaked, the Reaganites remain euphoric, jubilant and as unrepentant as the Kremlinites who ordered the downing of the civilian Korean jetliner.

In this age of doublethink and Newspeak, the Soviets term their invasions "aid to national liberation movements". The Americans call theirs "rescue missions," a phrase currently in vogue in Reaganite lexicography to describe the air raids and marine landings on Grenada. International law be damned. Might is right. That is the unmistakable signal that the militarists in America have sent to the rest of the world. And it will be a while before America can regain the slight moral edge it enjoyed in international relations in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

American macho, again, is in. The pitiful helpless American giant, out. Uncle Sam, flaccid since his castration at the hands of the bearded mullahs in Iran, is once again tumescent. Last fortnight, President Reagan celebrated his country's new-found potency in some of these glowing phrases. He called the Grenada invasion "that marvellous operation" adding that American engineers are "repairing roads and bridges and buildings and homes" in Grenada, while medical corps men are vaccinating children. They are doing what Americans have always done, and don't know if we've ever had any better missionaries for our country abroad than the US soldiers in Grenada.

In religious news broadcasts, well known evangelists and fundamentalist preachers—notable among them "the voice of Americanism"—are Elmer Gantrying the air waves to death with "praises be" to the Lord that "this great nation of ours" has found its muscle again. It's known as the "kill-a-Commie-for-Christ" mentality.

And the American Rangers—the army's elite shock—the true grit. Clint Eastwood clones, who were air-dropped the Caribbean island to search and destroy enemies and soldiers, are now back in Georgia, and celebrating. A rock band welcoming them home belted out a number that began "guys kicked ass in Grenada." The lead vocalist screamed into a microphone: "You know what the Commies want from us? pretty women and our rock'n roll. But you have got to be free to rock'n roll and baby, we're free thanks to you guys." Rangers who covered the festive homecoming of "Ronnie's Rangers" of them put it, recorded several interviews with members of the strike force.

Sergeant Jerry Purkey, 24, who had killed his first enemy was quoted in *The Washington Post* as saying: "It felt kinda good. During a fire-fight he saw two Cubans dash for cover. I was running. I knew what I had to do and I did it. Now there's no Commie in the world." Another Ranger, a farm boy from Georgia, introduced himself to reporters with the words: "I'm a world-famous Commie-killer, lover of women, defender of



US troops readying for attack: self righteous "rescuers"

Reaganite rhetoric—saber-rattling over the Caribbean. Reagan has not only helped to bring American militancy to a new consciousness to its ugliest but also, as a commentator on *N REALITY* "has broken through the political and psychological obstacles that have restrained American students from pursuing adventures since Vietnam."

Vietnam Hangover—a popular reaction to the Vietnam war kept out of Angola in 1975. For all the forced the Carter administration to deal with Zaire, independence and the revolution in Angola in 1981. Reagan has broken the spell. He appears, has resolved the earth. He was by pleas from his European ally, Prime Margaret Thatcher, was aghast at the prospect of the United States attacking the Commonwealth where the Queen's governor-general is a strong anti-American spokesman pool-poled soon be the United Nations Assembly.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes said that the United Nations vote had "more to say about the state of the United Nations than it does about developments in Grenada". Nor did the obvious comparison between Afghanistan and Grenada ruffle Reagan. When asked to comment on this at his last press conference, he responded: "The Soviets had 'murdered' an American ambassador in Afghanistan, moved against all the opposition of the Afghanistan people," "every vicious form of warfare," and killed women and children. He failed to mention that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan occurred several months after Ambassador Adolph K. S. was killed during an attempt to rescue him from his captors.

One of the biggest historical canards that has been perpetuated in recent pop American history is that, for too long, America has responded peacefully to relentless political and aggressive insults from other countries and that the American Gulliver's bonds must be broken. This view of America-as-last-outpost-of-pacifism is

drawn by warmongers during the waning days of the Carter administration. Reagan campaigned on the theme of restoring American "credibility" with her allies with promises of the most ambitious arms build-up ever attempted by a president.

IN REALITY, Americans have fought repeatedly in different parts of the world during the last 38 years. Since 1945, more than 100,000 Americans have fallen in combat. And Reagan would not have many more fall if he pursues the course he has taken in Lebanon and Grenada. Hard core right-wingers within the Administration are privately applauding the Grenada invasion as having "ended back communism for the first time since 1945". And within the administration lurks an ominous portent. The Grenada invasion—several observers have expressed this fear publicly—could well be a rehearsal for similar moves against Nicaragua and Cuba. For all the flimsy and constantly changing excuses offered by the administration to justify the invasion of the island, the bottom line is not hard to see. Reagan's move is both political and ideological. It is a message to all the nations in that region that America will not tolerate Marxist regimes being born and eliminate those that have been consolidated. Reagan will have no more Cubas or Castros in his backyard. Ever since Castro blundered into Ethiopia in 1974, the phrases "Cuban presence" and "Cuban-trained" have acquired a special place in American geo-political demonology. References have a subliminal shock value roughly equal to Israeli references of the word "terrorists" when they refer to the Palestinians.

The tragedy is that these psychic code words suggesting imminent danger from "Cuban-trained" Marxist fanatics have filtered into the American press and are bandied about with very little reasoning or analysis. Ignoring—or forgetting—the succession of draconian press censorship that accompanied the invasion of the main stream American media—including liberal commentators like Bill Moyers—have swallowed Reagan's line that Marxist armed fortress from where fanatical cadres of revolutionaries were soon to be bludgeoning the rest of the Caribbean and Central American nations into submission with hammers and sickles. There is as little evidence to justify this startling

assertion as there is for the multitude of earlier excuses Reagan and his cohorts used to justify their lovely little war. Consider the following:

► The invasion was a rescue mission to protect the lives of hundreds of American medical students at St George's University in the wake of the coup that ousted Prime Minister Bishop. The chancellor of the medical school, Charles Modica, has said that no American student was ever in any danger. Modica says he was instructed by the

Ambassador to Barbados, Milan Bush, to lie about the students' safety and several of the students themselves indicated that their lives were endangered not by the Coard regime but by American bombs and rocket fire.

► Cubans were helping Grenada upgrade and expand a crucial airstrip that could serve as a Communist air-base for the supply of arms. In reality, the Grenadans—for tourist purposes—have sought financing for 25 years to lengthen the airstrip. Half the money for the civilian airstrip has been provided by

West European companies. And a British firm—Plassey—had been supervising the construction.

► The Granadans had amassed a huge cache of sophisticated weapons in several warehouses and the American invasion captured these massive arsenals of destruction in the nick of time. There were thousands of Cuban and even Soviet troops on the island. These stories were put out by the White House—and faithfully parroted by the media—during the news black out when reporters were kept away from the island. After reporters were allowed on the island, they reviewed the warehouses. Some of them contained construction equipment, some were half-empty while others contained antique rifles, dating back to 1870. The "Soviets" turned out to be a handful of Soviet diplomats, while most of the 700 Cubans on the island were construction workers with a small contingent of military advisors. The new communist haven in the Caribbean had neither an air force nor a navy.

► Bernard Coard, who ousted prime minister Maurice Bishop in a coup, did so with Castro's internationalist aims. In reality, Bishop was extremely close to Castro and regarded him as a father figure. Bishop received a tumultuous welcome from Castro in Havana. Castro could hardly have supported, let alone been pleased with, Coard's coup against Bishop.

► An alliance of neighbouring countries invited the United States to join them in invading Grenada in the interests of the stability of that region. In reality, the neighbouring countries provided only a couple of hundred soldiers, while America provided thousands. As one observer commented: "Neighbouring countries asking the United States to invade Grenada is like your neighbours inviting someone else to move into your house. This is the basis of Reagan's good neighbour policy."

"The overall beneficiary of the horrible episode," wrote James Ridgeway and Alexander Cockburn in *The Village Voice*, "is Ronald Reagan whose campaign took an immediate and predictable leap forward along the lines suggested by Thatcher's ascendancy after the Falklands war. On Sunday, he was a President presiding over a little-understood and disastrous presence in Lebanon. Four days later he was recouping on national television in the wake of Grenada. The invasion of Grenada immediately unified Republicans and divided Democrats."

THE COMMONWEALTH

The Grenada Divide

UNTIL last fortnight, the only international influence the spice island of Grenada could boast of had been to determine the price of nutmeg. President Reagan's invasion has, at least temporarily, altered that. The events his Marines set in motion have exploded a political bombshell whose fall-out has spread from this Caribbean island to the remotest corners of international debate. And it now seems as if this drama could dominate next fortnight's Commonwealth summit as well. In all probability, it could convert what was meant to be an amiable gathering into a fraught conference. If that happens, it will present Mrs Gandhi, as host, with an unexpected and trying test of her powers of tact and diplomacy.

This is because the events of last fortnight have thrown into sharp and potentially threatening focus two rifts which might well split a Commonwealth consensus. The first is that between the eight Caribbean states who supported or invited an invasion and the four who are deeply against it. The second is the wider divide separating the Commonwealth 'moderates', who are US supporters, or at least content to accept US action, and the 'radicals', who having seen in America's decision an ill-judged action are now baying for its blood.

Balancing Act: For Mrs Gandhi the trick will be balancing the opposing pulls of these factions whilst finding some common ground for the conference to present a united front at its conclusion. For either one of these disputes looks likely to disrupt the conference and in all probability, both will. The most fire-prone tinder is probably the tensions within the Caribbean states themselves. Four countries, Belize, Bahamas, Trinidad and Guyana, have condemned the invasion. Guyana actually raised the issue at the Security Council—its Marxist Government has never been a friend of Reagan's America—and it seems unlikely that it will lie low now. In that event, it will of course have the full support of the other three Caribbean 'dissenters'.

Equally unlikely to contain itself is the anger of the eight Caribbean states who have welcomed the invasion but have been dismayed by the 'insensitiveness' and 'lack of understanding' of those who have opposed it. In particular, they feel deeply let down by Britain. John Compton, prime minister of St Lucia, put into words their sense of outrage: "If it had not been the Americans, it would have had to be somebody else. We did not really expect response from Britain, but we

did not expect this condemnation either."

These small, and, most importantly, on-their-own defenceless states have traditionally relied on 'outside' support for their own security. Their present governments look upon the US in that light. The fact that Britain, along with a lot of the Commonwealth, has not shared their perspective has left them convinced that they are victims of deliberate and callous indifference. At Delhi they may find it well nigh impossible to resist the temptation to present their case. In that event Eugenia Charles of Dominica, John Adams of Barbados, Edward Seaga of Jamaica, and Compton of St Lucia will not mince words in praise of their American friends.

Troubled Waters: More difficult to control, assuming that Mrs Gandhi with adroit behind-the-scenes support from a suitably



placatory British Government and an equally reassuring American administration can calm these troubled Caribbean currents, will be the ideological cleavage between the Commonwealth moderates and radicals.

Several of the radicals have a history of anti-Americanism. Zimbabwe is still smarting at the treatment Mugabe allegedly received from Reagan during his last Washington visit. And at the moment he isn't all that fond of Mrs Thatcher either. Rawlings's Ghana, with its close Libyan contacts, has its own American axe to grind. Tanzania and Zambia have a reputation of 'radicalism' to maintain while Nigeria will not want to be left behind. Even Australia under Hawke and Hayden sees its foreign policy in terms of the defence of small states against the expansiveness of the superpowers. At Delhi they will strive to express the voice of Grenada which Reagan has snuffed out.

The challenge all of this throws in Mrs Gandhi's direction is daunting. Given the Commonwealth custom of decision by con-

sensus, even the disruptive influence of a mere fraction of the members determined to discuss the invasion could destroy the summit. She might try to paper over. As each state has the right to raise any issue, it's hard to see how Mrs Gandhi can prevent it.

Instead, what Mrs Gandhi is trying to do is to render such a summit unnecessary. After all, her aim is a peaceful and successful summit under her leadership. And so, her strategy has been to cleverly manoeuvre contentious issues out of the summit and plant them firmly within the ambit of the summit.

Her motive appears to be to prevent a discussion of all issues arising out of the invasion and thus prevent division over the invasion itself. To paraphrase: If members can be made to accept that the UN is the appropriate organisation to manage the post-invasion issues, then, *ipso facto*, there is no real point in raising them in Delhi. Unless the Commonwealth summit is to discuss about such matters the smaller the summit is, the better it is for Mrs Gandhi. It is tripping over itself in the mind of Mrs Gandhi debate.

Maintaining Unity: In this respect, a major tactic to date has been a public statement seemingly short-circuiting the diplomatic machinery of Commonwealth communication. Therein, she has stated that the question of security force for Grenada was "beyond the purview of the Commonwealth". And, no doubt, she has given the same response, made in a similar tone and unilateral fashion, to the suggestion that the Commonwealth do its bit to help Grenada recover from its trauma by sending advisers to help the governor-general, observers and staff to monitor the elections.

Despite Mrs Gandhi and South Africa's best efforts, it is in the very nature of the membership of Commonwealth that in Grenada have caused such disruption. Unity can no longer be maintained by a ruse of silence. At least 20 of the world's smallest countries. Their size and economic dependence and overall vulnerability are akin to that of Grenada. And the impunity with which Grenada fell victim to the invasion alarmed them. Their first reaction was to be bound to be to raise as big a hue and cry as possible, in the hope that the same thereafter never happen to them.

There is very little Mrs Gandhi can do about it. And yet, in the days to come, pressure to hold the summit together will focus almost singly on her shoulders. It will be many who will be hoping that she might somehow pull it off.

—KARAN THAPAR

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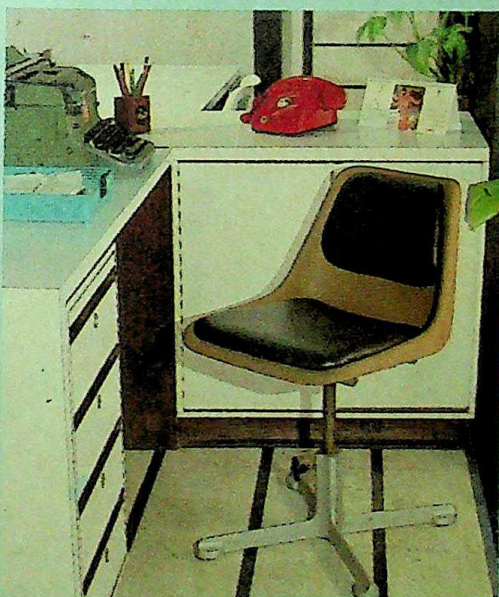
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Mumtaz Ahmed: courtroom dramatics

Writers' Cramp

THE SHOT fired in a Patna court is still reverberating through the state. Though the bullet fired by the young Muslim fanatic, Mumtaz Ahmed, went harmlessly into the ceiling of the court, the judge was trying to establish whether the case was part of a conspiracy to whip up communal feelings. Ahmed is said to have confessed that he wanted to take a high profile hostage to focus government attention on Muslim demands for a ban on a newspaper named *Madhyakalin Arab* by a reader of Patna University named Dhanpati Pandey. Initially Ahmed said that he and a group of friends had toyed with several ideas including Rajiv Gandhi hostage, hijacking a plane or even killing Pandey. He also admitted that some influential Muslim clerics had approved of his plans.

Ahmed's courtroom dramatics at least have highlighted Muslim grievances which have been smouldering for the last three years. Muslim religious leaders have been protesting over three books—*Boya Per* by K. Ka, by CPI leader Mahabir Prasad (History) by Dhanpati Pandey at Patna University. All three contain derogatory references to the Prophet Muhammad. Pandey makes a series of derogatory remarks about the

Prophet's personal life.

Soon after the uproar about Akela's book, a committee called the Markazi Tahaffuz-e-Islam Action Committee (Central Protection of Islam Action Committee) headquartered in Bhagalpur was formed. The express aim of the committee was to keep watch for books that might contain references that offended Muslim sentiments. Meetings were also held to protest the "calculated move against Islam". In Bhagalpur, Mohammed was not observed and black flags were hoisted in the town, till Bhagalpur University Vice-Chancellor Quamar Tauhid proscribed the book and the syndicate set up a three-man committee to go into the controversy. The governments of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal also moved in soon afterwards and banned *Madhyakalin Arab* and another book by the same author, *Vishwa Itihas*.

Pandey who is now out on anticipatory bail points out on his defence that he has only quoted western historians like H.G. Wells and Will Durant on the Prophet. He

adds that *Madhyakalin Arab* was first published in 1973. He claims that he has fallen prey to university politics.

Wide Publicity: These developments by themselves were quite serious enough. But the Muslim organisations which had first risen in protest against Akela's book also took the step of trying to spread the news of the slights to Islam throughout the country. The offending parts of the book—which had not even been published—were widely publicised. In West Bengal the news was picked up by the vocal Urdu press. The specific portions of the book which deemed to be offensive were reproduced by *Akhbar-e-Mashriq* a three-year-old Calcutta Urdu daily. As Akela pointed out to an interviewer in jail: "They themselves were guilty of broadcasting the portion of the book which they found objectionable. Jamait-e-Islami took special interest in this campaign."

When the controversy about Pandey's history book broke out the Tahaffuz-e-Islam and a handful of Urdu dailies again took up the task of focussing attention on the issue. An inflammatory circular signed by Mohammed Iqbal Farakh, a member of the action committee, was sent last month to Urdu dailies outside Bihar and to various organisations calling upon Muslims to unite and "be ready to sacrifice their lives and properties". The circular in Hindi suggested that action committees should be formed in all states and that black days should be observed.

Urdu dailies in various regions carried this circular prominently resulting in a spate of demonstrations.

The biggest rumpus was in Calcutta. Once again the *Akhbar-e-Mashriq* took the lead in blowing the issue out of all proportion. It not only carried the texts of the books, but also ran a spate of special features, editorials and articles on the subject. It also allowed a good deal of space to its readers to offer their views on the subject. Inevitably a lot of the material published in *Akhbar-e-Mashriq* found its way into newspapers in other

parts of the country.

Each one of *Akhbar-e-Mashriq*'s attacks was more vitriolic than the other. In August the newspaper highlighted a news item about a Muslim meeting where Maulana Mohammed Sabir, the Imam of Nakhud Masjid is said to have declared: "Do not test our patience by insulting our *Rasool* (Prophet). We respect law but we cannot tolerate an insult to our *Nabi* (Prophet)." Still worse was to come. In September the newspaper

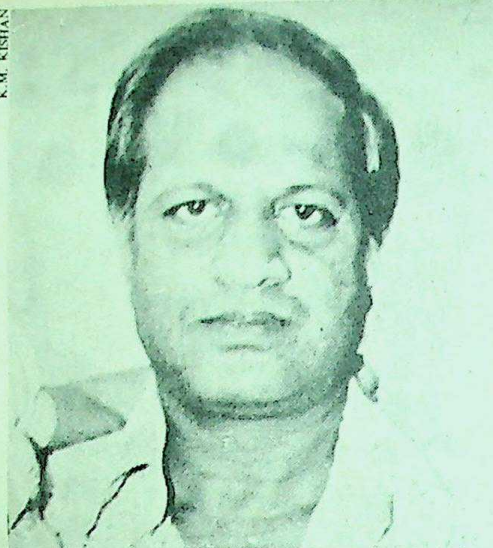


Madhyakalin Arab:
controversial

published a series of three articles by Maulana Sulaiman Merathi tracing the history of "unholy attacks on the character of Islam and its Prophet".

IN OCTOBER the newspaper topped all this by saying: "If the Muslims have real love for *Mohsin-e-Insaniat Nabi Karim* (Prophet), then they should rise not only against Dhanpati Pandey but also against Bihar Chief Minister Chandra Sekhar Singh who is guilty of insulting our Prophet." In another article on October 14 the paper scoffed at the "existing secularism and democracy" and said that "we do not have faith in the hoax." Says *Akhbar-e-Mashrique's* Managing Editor M.W. Haque: "We take serious notice of the insult against our *Rasool*. When we knew of Akela's book we created public opinion against it. Once news appeared, letters started pouring in. We are for the Muslims' cause but we never preached violence."

Moderate Views: Moderate Muslims have been taken aback by the virulent campaign launched in the Urdu press. West Bengal Deputy Speaker Kalimuddin Shams says that only one daily is responsible for playing up the entire issue. Shams points out that there has seldom been violence in Bengal even when the Muslims were exor-



CPI leader Mahabir Prasad: stormy writing

cised over such issues. Says Shams: "We are surprised how this is happening in Bengal." He also suggests that more stringent steps should be taken against anybody who offends the Prophet of any religion in any way.

According to Mumtaz's confession he was inspired to his act of bravado in the Patna High Court after he read *Akhbar-e-Mashrique*. He claims that several others,

including some Muslim religious were fully aware of his intentions that he reached Patna on October 10 and went straight to the high court with a three-point demand handed in taking the judge hostage. As a result of confession, an alleged co-conspirator in the crime, Faiyaz Bhagalpuri who once worked for the Palestine Liberation Organisation and two others in Bihar Sharif have been arrested.

But the question of whether there actually was any organised plot still remains open. Senior special branch officers in Bengal dismiss such ideas saying that in fact due to rivalry among two Urdu dailies that the matter was blown out of proportion and the atmosphere of fear or die was created." The president of Urdu Editors Council (Bihar unit) has gone on record to say that "everybody was trying to fish in troubled water" and whether Mumtaz's courtroom confession was the result of an organised plot or there can be no doubt at all that there were any number of motivated people who were on the sidelines to exploit the slightest trouble.

—FARZAD AHMED

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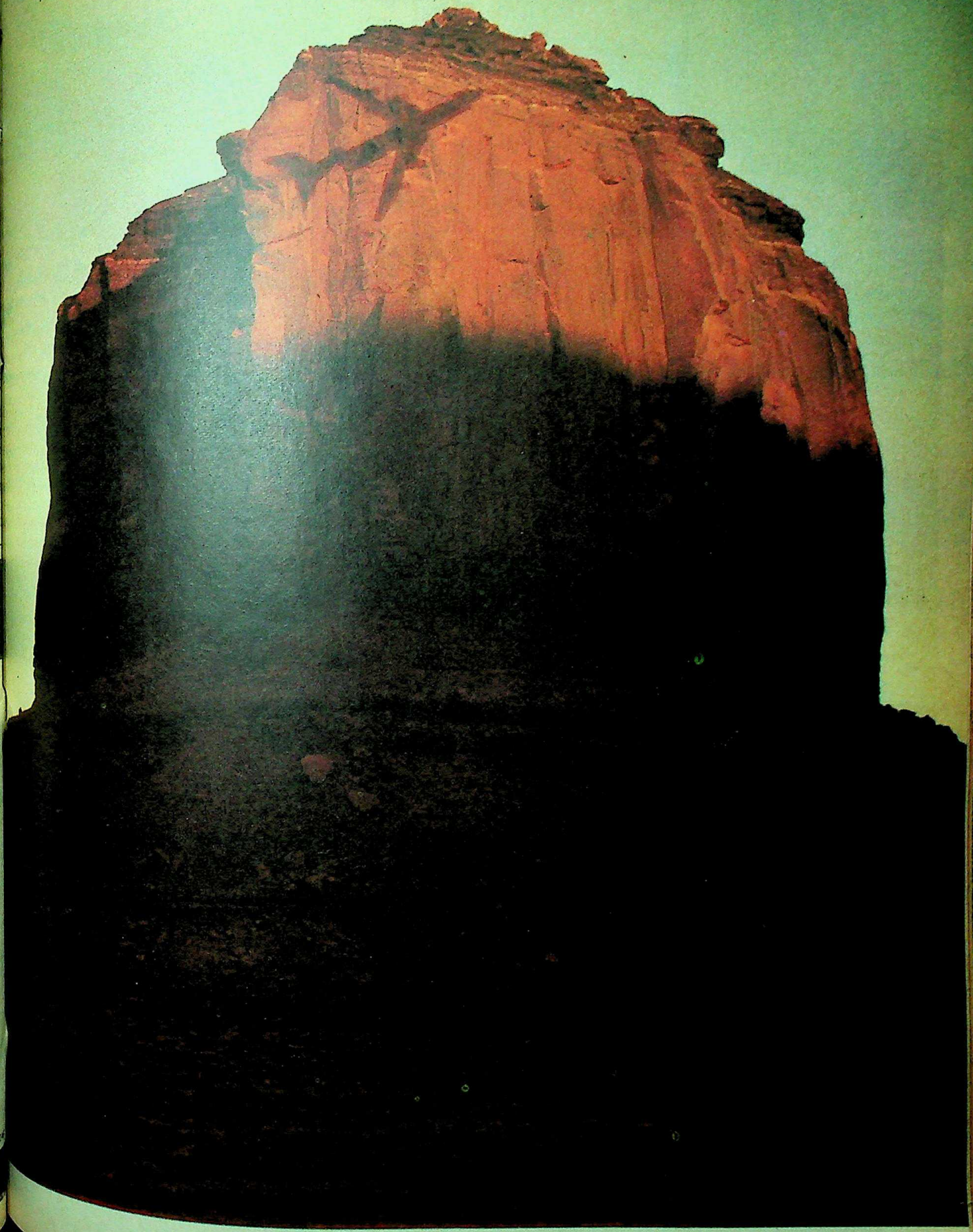
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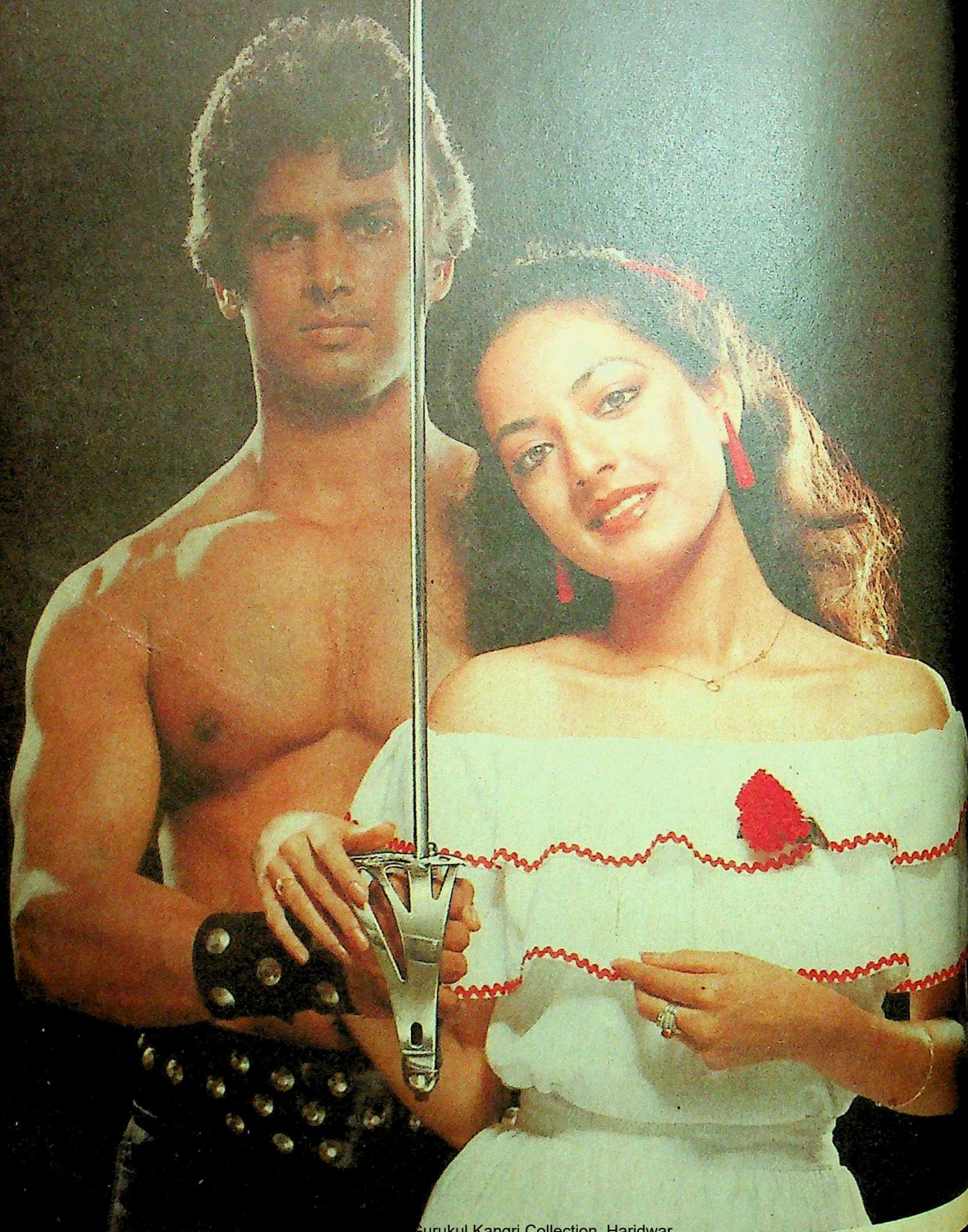
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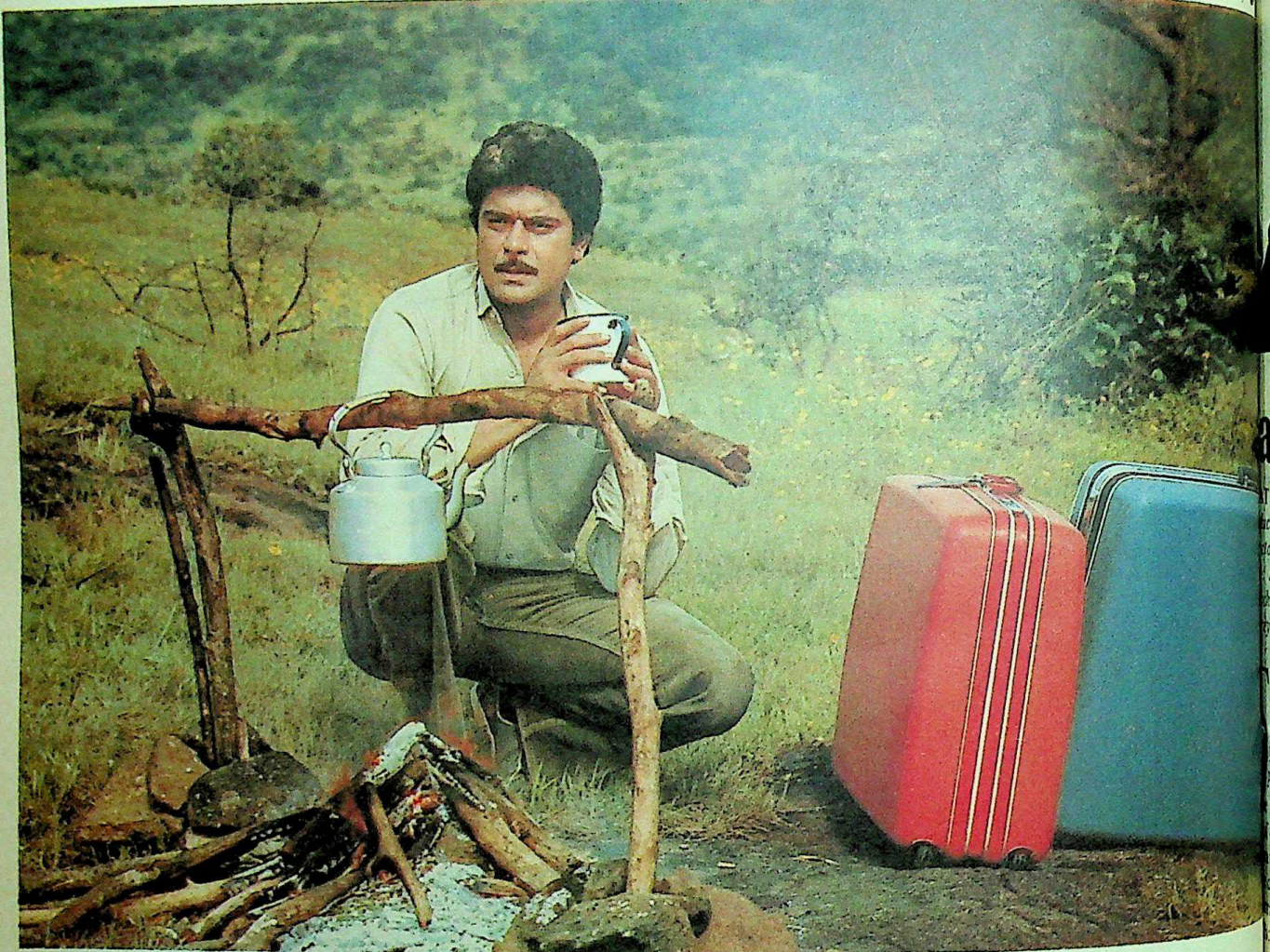
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CINEMA



Kapoor and Scacchi in a clinch: listless lust

Familiar Ghosts

HEAT AND DUST

Director: Ismail Merchant

Screenplay: James Ivory

Cast: Shashi Kapoor, Julie Christie, Greta Scacchi, Christopher Cazenove, Madhur Jaffrey, Zakir Husain

THE GOOD news about *Heat and Dust* is that it looks so good. The bad news is that it has nothing new to say. The Booker Prize-winning novel by Ruth Jhabvala which marks 21 years of Merchant-Ivory partnership is a film that becomes more lush, the story-telling more complex, the colours and sounds more seductive. The people haven't changed, but what is happening to them is a throwback to earlier Merchant-Ivory movies; and what they think and feel is simply a rerun of the English view of life in India.

They can be slotted into three, now four, categories: the seekers, the over-achievers and the preachers. Anne (Julie Christie) is the contemporary English seeker who has come to find out the truth about the confines of the English ruling class with an Indian nawab. Chid (Christopher Cazenove), the American spiritualist, is the spaced-out western whose body is cracking under the pressure of transcendental salvation. And Olivia (Greta Scacchi) is

the over-reacher, the newly-married wife of a British official in the Raj, inexorably drawn by the sexual power and princely glory of the profligate nawab.

Two stories are told here, Anne's story and Olivia's story, and dexterously interleaved, they add up to near-identical consequences. Both women throw convention to the winds to be drawn into the timeless sweep of India; both, it is suggested, will end up being devoured by the heat and dust and the unrequited emotion that India engenders; India will eat into the soul, as it were, of such aliens as choose to come too close.

Such has been the fate of countless Jhabvala characters who came and went down under (only the infrequent Chids, wracked by amoeba and spiritual sickness, went home). But to what extent were Indians themselves responsible (never mind the hazards of heat and dust) for furthering the disintegration of the feckless searchers?

Strange Assumptions: Apparently quite a lot, if the Indian characters of *Heat and Dust* are to be believed. They're an altogether bewildering lot, mysterious, devious, irresponsible, rather decadent. Take the nawab, played in haphazard fashion by a Shashi Kapoor grown positively portly: he's too much of an oddball really, wonderfully handsome but also rashly impulsive, quite crooked and, yes, altogether quite sinister. And it is never clear why he chooses to cast his spell on Olivia. There's his mother, the Begum (Madhur Jaffrey) ruthlessly

scheming to upstage her son's affair with the white woman.

And in Anne's story, there is Inder Lal (Zakir Husain), the slightly grubby, lower-middle class fragment of contemporary India with whom she has a brief affair. All these Indians add up to very little against their English friends; they appear rudderless, veering between Jhabvala's extremities of the unabashedly exotic and unashamedly seedy. They have seemingly no inner life; in comparison to the English, their motivations are left fuzzy and their characters on the verge of fade-out. "All Ivory's Indian characters," said critic Chidananda Dasgupta, "continue to suffer not only from perpetual amoebiosis but an inhuman lust for the white woman."

The last is especially true in the progress of the Indians in the love-making sequences. While the nawab grabs at Olivia's breasts and crotch in a sudden burst of animal passion, Inder Lal fumbles like a gawk in his advances towards Anne. Both Englishwomen on the other hand, appear deliciously laid-back in their expectation of sex. It is apparent that they have the expertise to demonstrate physical emotion. But the Indians? Obviously not.

This peculiar balance of inequality is a Jhabvala-Ivory characteristic. But whereas in earlier films like *Shakespearewallah* and *The Householder*, the inevitability of the cultural collision was viewed with the gentleness of wry comedy and the melancholy regret of true pathos that raised the situation to a universal level of understanding, *Heat and Dust* minimises the scope of issues involved. It particularises India in a series of exquisite or awful but inevitable images; it reduces Indians to be contained in strait-jackets of stereotype. That is perhaps the chief reason for the film's enormous commercial success in England.

The fact, however, remains that it is a beautifully paced film; also ravishing in its wealth of visual detail and period reconstruction. And two performances must be singled out as extraordinary: Greta Scacchi as Olivia is a discovery. She has a lingering loveliness that never palls; it merely heightens the nuance of a woman hovering on the brink of boredom and burning passion. And Madhur Jaffrey as the beady-eyed begum, heavily jewelled and hennaed and puffing away ignominiously, brings into an all-too-brief appearance, an unforgettable aura of malignant cunning. It's these two performances that elevate the film's level, beside its overall dressing of locale and decor. But the film's inner core remains hollow partly because, over the years, the refrain has remained the same. Just another bad case of Anglo-India going pop.

—SUNIL SETHI



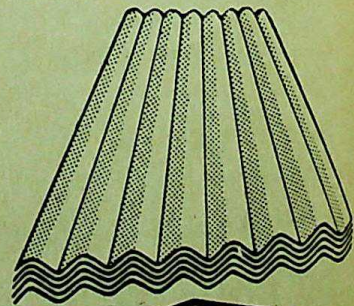
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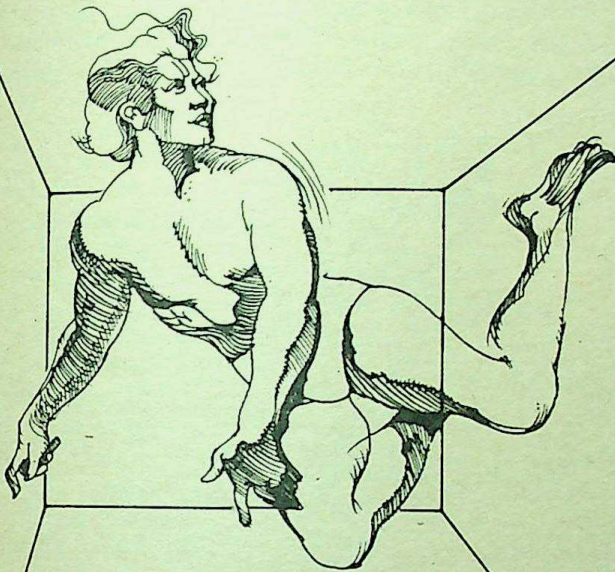
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VISHNUPRAYAG PROJECT

Blueprint For Disaster

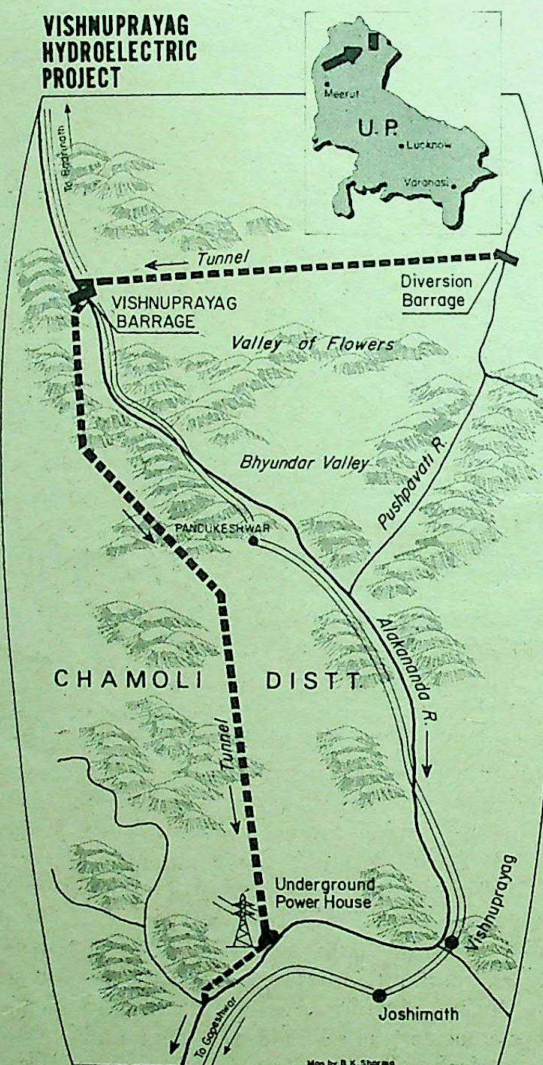
SIX YEARS ago, when the Uttar Pradesh Government decided to embark upon its most ambitious project, the creation of the highest dam in Asia at Vishnuprayag a few miles downstream of the Badrinath Temple, the idea was to transform the area into a powerhouse of the north. In under two decades, it was said, the Rs 266 crore project, generating 480 mw of power would wipe out the chronic power shortfall in the region. Today, with an estimated Rs 10 crore down the drain, the technocrats involved are wringing their hands and politicians are getting cold feet about the entire project. The building of the Vishnuprayag dam has become a raging environmental issue along the lines of the proposed hydel project in Kerala's Silent Valley which has now finally been scrapped. With the Himalayan dam's feasibility in serious question, progress at Vishnuprayag has temporarily come to a halt and there is speculation whether it will ever be resumed. Shuttling back and forth from the Uttar Pradesh Irrigation Department in Lucknow and the Planning Commission (which originally passed the project) in the capital, the dam's future has now come to rest with the Centre's recently-established Department of Environment which is the final authority.

Will the Vishnuprayag project go the way of Silent Valley? If so, who blundered in selecting the site? And who brought the environmental hazards to light? Up in the clean, crisp air of the Garhwal mountains, in a town called Gopeshwar (population: 10,000) some 60 km short of Badrinath, one man has singularly been responsible for bringing to public notice how the creation of a mammoth dam will destroy the ecology of the area—including the Valley of Flowers which has been declared a biosphere reserve by the Environment Department to protect its unique flora.

The man is Chandi Prasad Bhatt, the founder of the Chipko movement who won the Magsaysay Award last year for his pioneering effort in mobilising popular, village-level support in preventing mass-scale felling of trees. An erstwhile school-teacher and transport company employee, who has been involved in social movements since a chance encounter with the late Jayaprakash Narayan in 1960, Bhatt has painstakingly been collecting data to show that the dam was a doom-laden idea from its inception. "The contradiction of our government's

thinking is typical," says the 50-year-old Bhatt in lucid arguments spelt out in chaste Hindi. "On the one hand they eagerly declare a part of the region ecologically vital and on the other hand they dig long tunnels and build barrages to destroy it."

Non-committal Officials: Roughly Rs 10 crore has so far been spent on the project on establishing a preliminary infrastructure. Says J.C. Gupta, chief engineer, Uttar Pradesh State Electricity Board (UPSEB): "That



is our initial investment—on roads, buildings and conducting exploratory surveys." Beyond that state officials are reticent to commit themselves—as far as they know the project has been referred back to the Centre. Ironically, the prime minister on her two-day visit to Garhwal, July last, categorically stated that the Government planned to go ahead with the project.

The Department of Environment admits that they have had to re-open the

Vishnuprayag case for review and will be linking an experts committee to survey it from scratch. The department's Deputy Minister Digvijay Singh remains, however, unimpressed by the possibility of the project being shelved. "If we handled Silent Valley, we could handle this," he says, admitting at the same time that the prime minister's remark about the dam going ahead was probably made because she was unaware of the latest development.

But even a cursory examination of the project's history makes it clear that it is a hare-brained scheme from the start—its site inadequately surveyed, poorly located and disastrous ecologically. In spite of these drawbacks the scheme has been expanded to double its production; it now includes an intricate development involving a complex of barrages and tunnels. The main barrage, 56 metres in width, will be built across the Alaknanda river at Vishnuprayag. Another barrage will be built across the Pushpavati, a tributary of the Alaknanda which flows through the spectacular Bhyunder Valley that constitutes the lower part of the Valley of Flowers. While a 12 km tunnel will be dug through the mountains at Vishnuprayag, another 7.5 km tunnel is planned for the Bhyunder, the idea being to reverse the flow of the Pushpavati for 5 km to join the waters of the Alaknanda and increase the flow of the 943 metres fall at Vishnuprayag.

The idea of linking the two rivers was a later idea, conceived as late as 1970, last year when it was discovered that the waters of the Alaknanda alone were inadequate to generate enough power. The dam's proposed capacity was increased from an original 262 mw to 480 mw. The changes in the plan were introduced whereupon the project was bounced back into the Planning Commission's lap, which in turn has referred it to the Department of Environment.

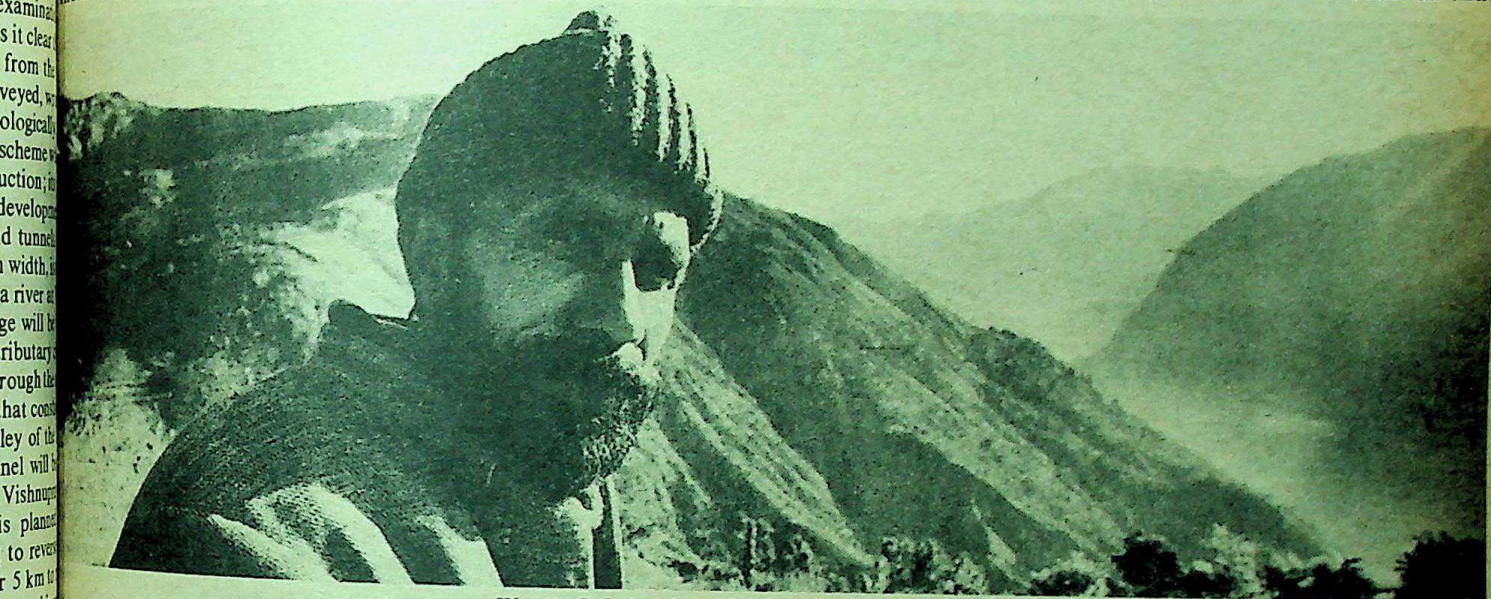
Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh Government, having passed the buck to the Centre, is behaving as if it had little to do with the project in the first place. Only a few years ago, it was contemptuously dismissing Bhatt's objections by issuing press releases that dismissed his demands as "baseless". Specifically, Bhatt's arguments are that the deliberate subverting of the Pushpavati's course, the calculated destruction of the fabled Valley of Flowers—already much depleted by the annual stampede of summer tourists—and the blasting of

of mountainside to dig tunnels, all port-
ecological disaster for the region. Addi-
hazards he fears are:
The plan to widen the 150 km Srinagar-
math road for increased traffic;
The creation of a 6 km bypass at Joshi-
town that would ruin the economy of
ancient town that serves as the last halt
grims to Badrinath;
The physical destruction of the town
which, situated in a landslide-prone
has been sinking for years. A 1976 state
ment report advised heavy tree plant-
around the town and banned any
ing in its environs;
And the ripping of the Bhyunder Valley

havoc perpetuated. As the state Govern-
ment's laws for mass-scale denuding of fo-
rests became more liberal in the early 1970s
(they auctioned off whole forests to manu-
facturers of badminton and tennis racquets)
Bhatt sought a mode of protest other than
the Marxist theory of belligerent direct
action or the Gandhian principle of passive
resistance. He found the mean when, faced
with direct confrontation with contractors
axing forests, he managed to mobilise village
folk to physically cling to the threatened
trees. "Chipko" soon became a cry heard
across all Garhwal (INDIA TODAY, March 15,
1982); it finally drove the Government into
declaring the whole of the Alaknanda catch-

Garudganga watershed covering some 27
villages. Taking the 100 sq km region as a mi-
crocosm of the Alaknanda catchment area,
their attempt is to collate all kinds of data
scientifically: from soil erosion studies to
basic geographic and demographic surveys.

But the most startling and conclusive
evidence—demonstrated through visual sli-
des, statistical data and geographical sur-
veying—they have turned up concerns the
Alaknanda barrage at Vishnuprayag. Their
contention is that the Government has made
no thorough glaciological or seismic study of
the land where the dam is to be built. "There
seems to have been no research in selecting
the site," says Kunwar. He believes that



Bhatt: fighting hare-brained schemes

10-km motorable road will finally
off its diminishing bowers of unique
according to Bhatt's estimates, the
species of rare Himalayan flowers
dwindled rapidly. "You would be
finding that about 50 today," he
region is so precariously interlinked
destroying one link could set off a fatal
reaction of imbalances.
They have first-hand experience of the
such disaster in the past. When the
last suffered a flood in the
of 1970, its waters swelled to a
of 60 ft and its raging torrent consu-
sweeping away nearly a hun-
angers, and affecting as many as a
ages in an area of 500 acres. Silting of
anal as the Alaknanda is the Gan-
tributary. Government estimates
the cost of clearing silt in di-
Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Saha-
elation, Bhatt discovered as a
the flood, was at the root of the

ment area as zone protected from felling
trees in 1977. Bhatt agrees that, finally, it is
the proliferation of humanity that causes de-
nuding of forests; and he agrees that the
press of civilisation and its progress cannot
be halted. New roads, which he repeatedly
cites as the first step towards ecological ruin,
are a necessity; so are the concomitant ha-
zards of modernity. "But if we are sure that
progress will, say, ensure a 60 per cent
improvement in the lives of the hill people,
we could arguably afford to sacrifice 40 per
cent of our natural environment. But in
projects such as the Vishnuprayag dam both
the Government and the people may end up
losing all."

Extensive Research: Bhatt's arguments
are based on careful research. With the
money from the Magsaysay Award now put
in trust for his cooperative known as the
Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, last year
he hired the services of two young fully-
trained geologists as paid employees.
Mahendra Singh Kunwar and Navin Juyal,
both post-graduates in geology from Sri-
nagar University in Garhwal have under-
taken an integrated development study in the

parts of the Vishnuprayag area are prone to
be swamped in glacier debris known as
moraine deposits which could seriously affect
the functioning of the barrage. Moreover,
even combined water supply from both the
rivers according to their calculations may
prove woefully inadequate to keep the dam's
four turbines in operation. "While in the
three months of the monsoon all four turbi-
nes could generate power, from November
to April the Alaknanda's supply drops be-
tween seven and 12 cu.secs which is just
enough to keep one turbine going."

Many of these facts, Bhatt and his team
believe, were known from the outset. In fact,
Bhatt's pleas which included a closely-ar-
gued letter to the prime minister and another
protest routed through Garhwal MP H.N.
Bahuguna, elicited no response. But the
public opinion he managed to generate has.
If the Vishnuprayag project is finally called
off, it will be another major triumph for
Bhatt and his colleagues. But if the dam-in-
the-doldrums materialises it will be an aby-
ssal commentary on bungling governments
that preach one thing and practice another.

—SUNIL SETHI in Gopeshwar

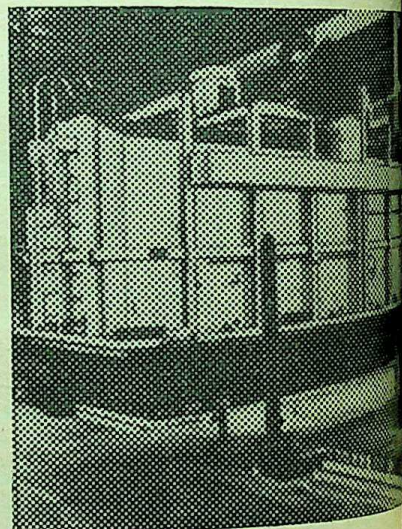
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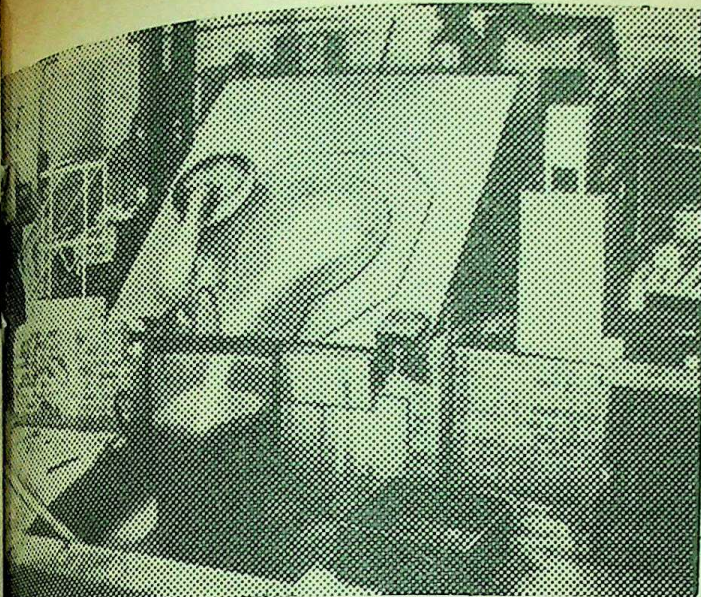
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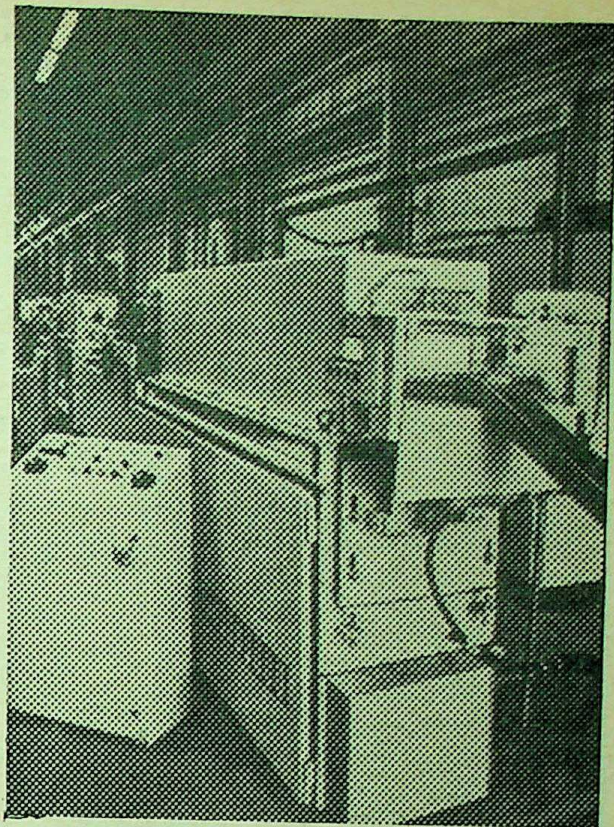
Rectangular bell furnace



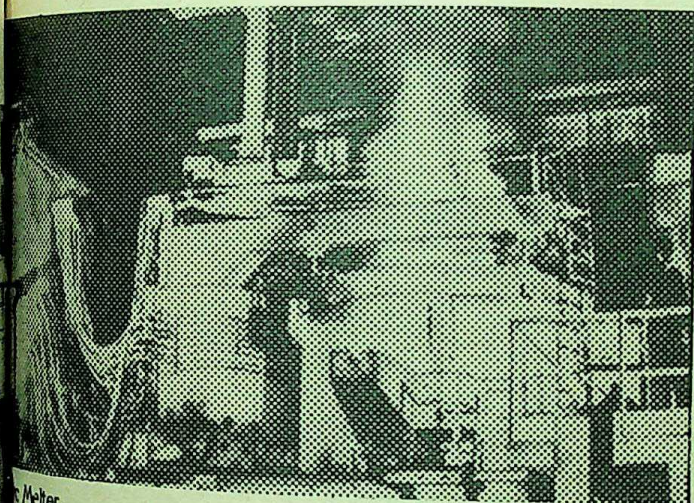
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Disastrous Slide



IT WAS only by a hair's breadth that India saved themselves from going two down against the West Indies after the Delhi Test. After a promising start, they were hopelessly outplayed in the first test and beaten in less than four days—by the demeaning margin of an innings and 83 runs.

The second Test, a fascinating match because of the constant ebb and flow of fortunes, was one of those rare contests between India and the giants of Test cricket in which India led on the first innings. Theirs was a substantial advantage of 80 runs and yet, India found themselves in a state of desperate crisis on the last morning. And they may not have been able to extricate themselves from this tangle had the West Indies attack not been depleted by a hamstring injury to Michael Holding, who was confined to the players' balcony on the final day.

In taking stock after the first two Tests, it must be remembered that India has not so far been pitted against Andy Roberts, the main wicket-taker for the West Indies when India played them at home, not many months ago. In the light of India's performance in the three Tests against Pakistan, the current state of the series against the West Indies is not surprising.

Formidable Side: There are, indeed, many chinks in India's armour, but that is not to deny the West Indies full credit for their achievements. They are an ageing side but still very formidable. There is depth to

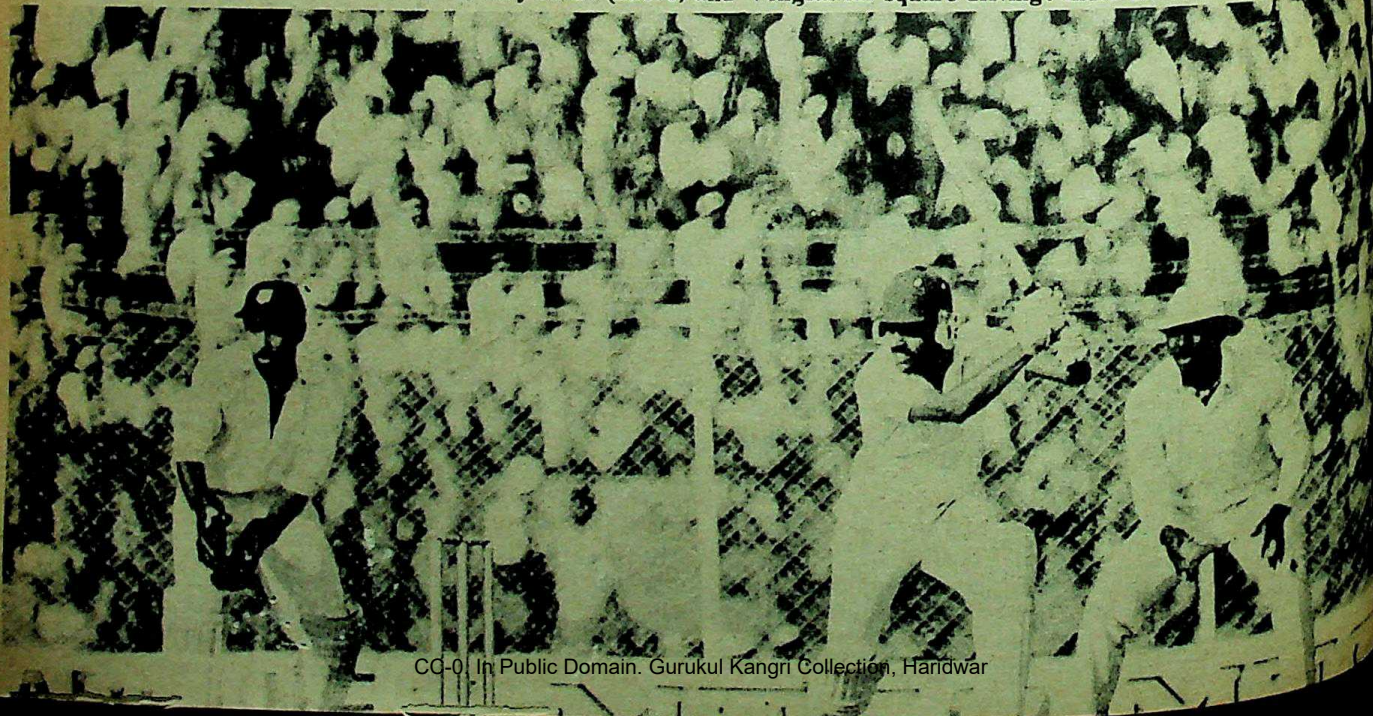
their batting and they are capable of throwing a fresh fast bowler at the opposition for most of the day.

Malcolm Marshall has been outstanding for speed and control, threatening to



PHOTOGRAPH BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Marshall in his delivery stride (above) and Vengsarkar square driving: India bamboozled



bang a nail into the coffin with Holding and Daniel are not as experienced bowlers, able to get pace from the deadeast pitch as they did at Ferozeshah Kotla.

Winston Davis, the junior member of the West Indies' fast bowling combination, has not lived up to the potential he showed in the zone matches preceding the Test. He lacked consistency in control and suffered from chronic 'no ball' problems. But he made his contribution, getting three wickets at vital stages of the first innings.

From the Indian viewpoint, the match has been all gloom. India have had no satisfaction and even glory, none more so than Sunil Gavaskar's achievement of scoring the first afternoon of the second Test. He completed his 29th Test century, putting him level with the immortal Kapil Dev.

Promising Players: In only his second Test innings, Kapil Dev has picked up five wickets, showing himself to be a much better bowler with the old ball than he used to be. He is a player of fast bowling and as a spinner, he has risen in stature and confidence, destined to become one of the world's leading all-rounders.

Dilip Vengsarkar has made a comeback to Test cricket, seemingly relaxed after his exile. He has scored 66 runs in his first two Test innings, all of them very well watched. Another growing asset is Binny. He continues to look a promising player of fast bowling, who has been nerved by adversity. Now that he has experienced, Binny might well play a leading role in the upper half of the batting order.

The achievement of Sunil Gavaskar has been a source of pride and inspiration for the Indian cricket fans.

th century was an occasion to savour, a source of pride and delight. This century will be remembered not just for its significance as a landmark in the history of the game, fittingly on this occasion, this innings was a genuine work of art. Its start was uncertain but long before Gavaskar reached 50, from only 37 runs, the canvas was resplendent with strokes of rare beauty and radiance.

Classic Century: When Gavaskar arrived at his century with a classic on-drive off his bat, Malcolm Marshall, he had been batting for three hours. By modern Test standards, this was a good rate, but not exceptional. However, measured in the soundness of balls received—94 in this century—this was Gavaskar's most rapid achievement ever and probably the fifth fastest ever recorded.

Gavaskar has always said that he is not a chaser of records. But he would not deny it was a relief to get the burden of the century off his shoulders. His reaction was one of genuine modesty. Although a great player in his own right, Gavaskar is a wide-eyed young hero-worshipper of the master. He said: "I have equalled Sir Donald's achievement, not his record. He got 29 hundreds in only 52 Tests, I have made 29 hundreds in only 95."

THE SCENE when Gavaskar reached his hundred was touching. There was spontaneous exuberance in the manner in which he was congratulated (by his brother, Dilip Vengsarkar, and that despite the fact that the two are no longer the closest of friends. The West Indians, who have spent hot and frustrating hours in the field against them since 1971, all beamed and smiles as they lined up to pat his back and shake his hand.

By the end of that memorable day, Gavaskar too had completed his century, unbeaten, and India were in the commanding position of 299 for three. On the next day, India went on to amass a total of their highest in their last 13 Test matches. It was an imposing score but one which was disappointing when viewed against the ground of the overnight score. Only Binny, who was last out with 52, was what it was, India should have made more than 500.

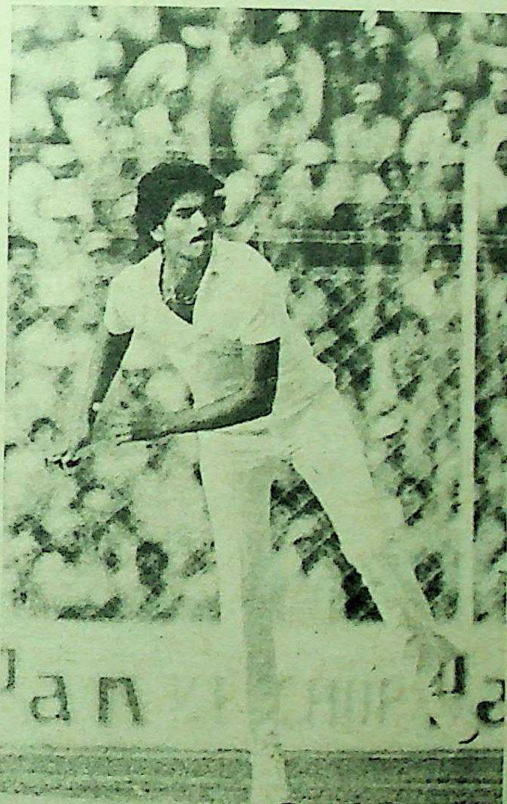
With India's bowling so limited, the way of putting the West Indies under pressure was to confront them with a gigantic rise for some while longer. Gordon, who had made 156 and 194 in his previous innings against India, was out

at 44 and on the following day, Desmond Haynes, his opening partner went at 45.

But the fact that Winston Davis, the night watchman batted quite safely for more than an hour on the third morning was an ominous sign. The pitch was somnolent, except that the ball was beginning to keep low and rough outside the left-hander's off stump. Shastri used this rough to prise out the obdurate Larry Gomes and also harried Clive Lloyd. But the veteran, with Logie as his sixth-wicket partner, held on grimly.

Valuable Wicket: Viv Richards was out, shortly after lunch, having made 67, a figure India would willingly have settled for, because Richards was in good touch and ruthless form, having hit eight fours and a six in the most arrogant manner. He fell lbw to Kapil as he shaped to flick the ball to mid-wicket, Clive Lloyd, the non-striker, indicating amazement when umpire Dotiwala's finger went up.

The dreaded letters "lbw" were a



Ravi Shastri: rising all-rounder

recurring factor in the scorecard, which was symptomatic of a pitch on which the ball kept low. There were murmurs about indifferent umpiring but Clive Lloyd put the lid on the controversy by saying at his end-of-the-match press conference that mistakes were inevitable when two men had to stand out there in heat and an atmosphere of high tension for five days.

Lloyd, the grafter, rather than the old destructor, made his sixth Test century against India and West Indies got to within 80 runs of India's score. Kapil Dev set up a

new personal best in this innings, taking six wickets, his biggest haul in 13 Test matches against the West Indies.

Slow Pitch: Only nine hours remained in the match when the second innings started, which was hardly time enough for the production of a decisive finish on a dreadfully slow pitch. India lost Gavaskar disconcertingly early, lbw to a ball from Holding that cut back quite viciously. There was more trauma when two wickets went down in one over, at 73, but India ended the day in the fairly secure position of 145 for four.

A tame draw was inevitable and, indeed, that was the eventual outcome. But the match did not peter out in the expected manner. There were such violent upheavals in the first half hour of the morning that a West Indies victory became a strong possibility. The fuse which threatened the Indian innings with demolition was lit by Malcolm Marshall, who took three wickets in five balls.

With just under five hours' playing time left, India were 166 for eight, leading by only 246 runs. If the two remaining wickets had gone down with half the swiftness with which four had fallen in the morning, India's goose would have been cooked. But Binny and Madan Lal, who had also staged a face-saving partnership of 117 in the first Test, checked the rot and West Indies, when they batted again, were left with a runs-to-time equation which, on this uneven pitch, they could not attempt to solve.

Threatening Pace: It was Marshall who had provided West Indies with such an easy victory in the first Test. He took four wickets in each innings, having bowled spectacularly fast and also scored 92 runs at a time when runs were needed.

India, clearly were undermined by speed, which is hardly surprising for, they are so unaccustomed to it. No doubt, they will be better adjusted to it as the series progresses but by then it will be too late. There is a mechanical method of preparing for a series in which pace is the opponents' major weapon. That is to practice with a bowling machine. It costs a modest sum but the Board seems to have other uses for its crores.

Another nettle that the Board refuses to grasp is Mohinder Amarnath. The leave of absence he asked for at the end of the series with Pakistan did him no good. He bagged a pair at Kanpur in the first Test and was not well enough to bat in his appointed place at number three in either innings at Delhi.

The Board will not confirm or deny that the viral fever which Amarnath claims to suffer from has been investigated. The selectors, when asked, just shrug their shoulders and slavishly keep picking him for each succeeding Test. I am becoming convinced that India's cricket's administration no longer has a backbone.

■ The plot smelt of a certain take-over. London-based, stocky, sterling-loaded businessman's son to wed into Delhi-based big time, restaurateur family. But the plot thickens at this point. Last fortnight, controversial, non-resident businessman **Swraj Paul** jetted into India for a special assignation—to see his son, **Ambar**, 24, married to **Gauri Lamba**, 18, the daughter of interior decorator and hotelier **Kailash Lamba**, in the capital. Ambar, an MBA from the University of Pittsburgh, US is the eldest twin son of Paul, who also has another son and a married daughter.

a degree in economics in London after the wedding. The couple's marriage was fixed by papa Paul, last April. Said Ambar, blushing: "We are mentally married already." And by all standards this is one company which should face no external threats!

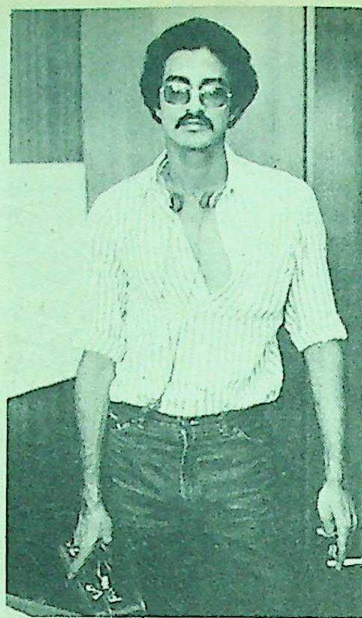
■ He tired of selling jeans, rolled up the carpet and set up a new gig. This time, however, the young, enthusiastic **Vikram Singh**, 29, seems to have struck gold on a happy note—he established the **Bombay Music Association** and brought in a bundle of fun for western pop



Gauri and Ambar: friendly takeover

ter. Tall and slick talking, Ambar holds the reigns of Paul's shipping agency in London. Asked what he felt about the whole take-over furore in India he chirped: "That's not my department. It's a gentleman's battle and best left to them. But one thing is for sure, Indian companies are heavily protected by the Government and it is a sure way to inefficiency. We are only trying to infuse competition and efficiency in them." A comment that rings a familiar bell. As for the wedding bells, Ambar seemed content with his latest acquisition. Gauri has just completed her schooling and plans to go on for

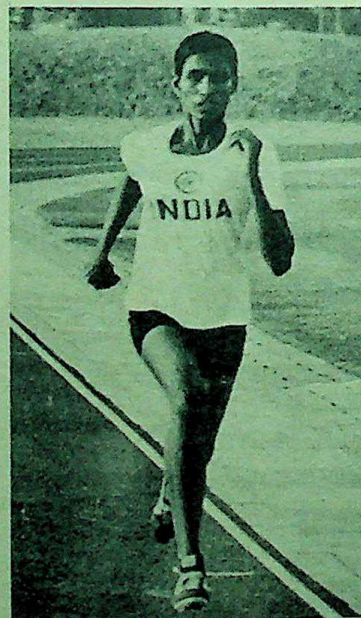
music lovers of the country. Last fortnight, Singh was all geared up to storm Bombay, Bangalore and Goa with **Bootleg Beatles**, an English band which emulates the Beatles to the 'T' with its now famous act called "**Beatlemania**". Singh began signing up bands like **Wishbone Ash**, **Punk Rockers**, **Boom Town Rats** way back in 1980. "But," said the smart-talking Singh, with a finely tuned ear to the live music market, "new wave does not work as well as seminal music in this country." And Singh changed tone and brought in heavy rock and roll groups like **Ujah Heep** for a six-concert tour of the



Singh: striking a high note

country last month. And, for this whiz-kid impresario, if the **Heep** concert is any indication, the **Bootleg Beatles**, who are near-clones of the originals, should make rock and roll fans swing from the rafters.

■ If the Asian Games held in New Delhi last November proved a damp squib for the lanky, curly-haired Indian athletic hope **P.T. Usha**, 20, then last fortnight's fifth Asian Athletics Championships in Kuwait was a coup for the Railways runner. "It's a great day in my life," gushed Usha after she romped home with a gold and



Usha: golden run

silver in the 400 metres and from that darling of the media and the crowds **Filipino** star-athlete **Lydia de la Cruz**. For Usha the gold medal acquisition was a long cherished dream—she clocked 54.23 seconds, bettering her earlier record of 54.43 secs. And for mentor coach **O.M. Nambiar** it was much more. He is responsible to a great extent, for shaping her talent. Declared a jubilation after Usha's gold medal victory: "It has been my dream and Usha has fulfilled it."

SIGN POSTS

■ **Awarded:** The **Jam** Bajaj awards for 1983 to **Dr Ramachandra Rao** of **nataka**, a crusader against social injustice, **Dr M. Desai** of **Pune**, a pioneer of rural projects and **P. Mehta**, a well-known worker of **Gujarat**.

■ **Awarded:** Indian Oil Corporation's **Sabarmati** award in **Ahmedabad**, the award from the **National Council**, **Chicago**, **US** working over two million hours without any accident from **January 1976** to **July 1983**.

■ **Awarded:** **Shiksha Chakraborty**, the national award painting in the second **All India Traditional Art Exhibition** in **New Delhi**.

■ **Appointed:** **S.S. Nadkarni** managing director of the **Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India**, chairman of the corporation with effect from **January 1984**. **Nadkarni** will take over from **S.S. Mehta** who resigned recently.

■ **Died:** **Syed Ali Zaheer**, noted lawyer, former Union minister and India's first ambassador to **Iran** and **Lucknow**, after a brief illness. **Zaheer** was the chairman of the first pay commission appointed by the **Uttar Pradesh** Government in **1970** and represented **India** at various international Islamic conferences.

■ **Died:** **K.N. Dave**, 90, renowned **Sanskrit** and **scholar** and **ornithologist** of **balpur**.

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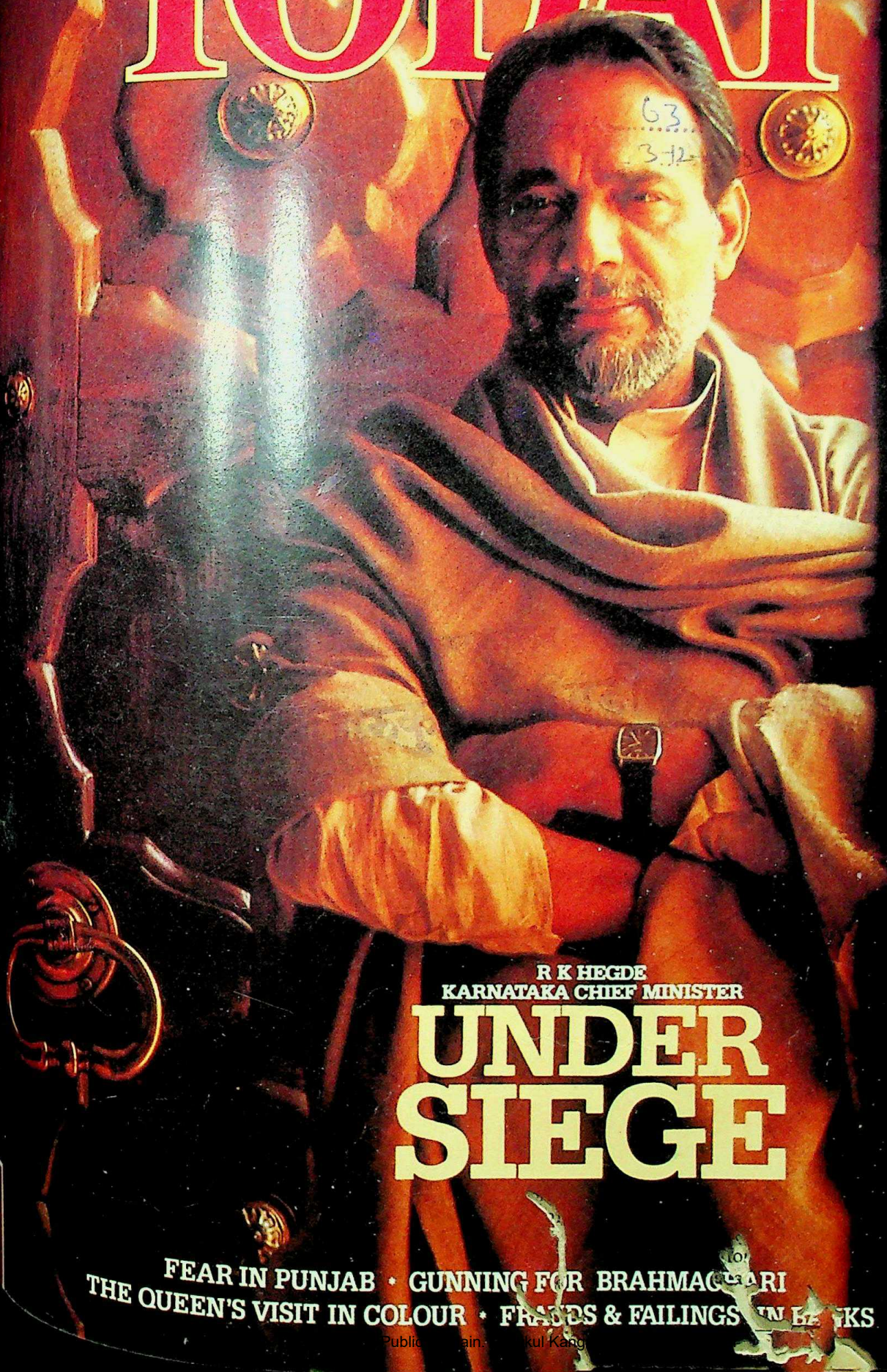
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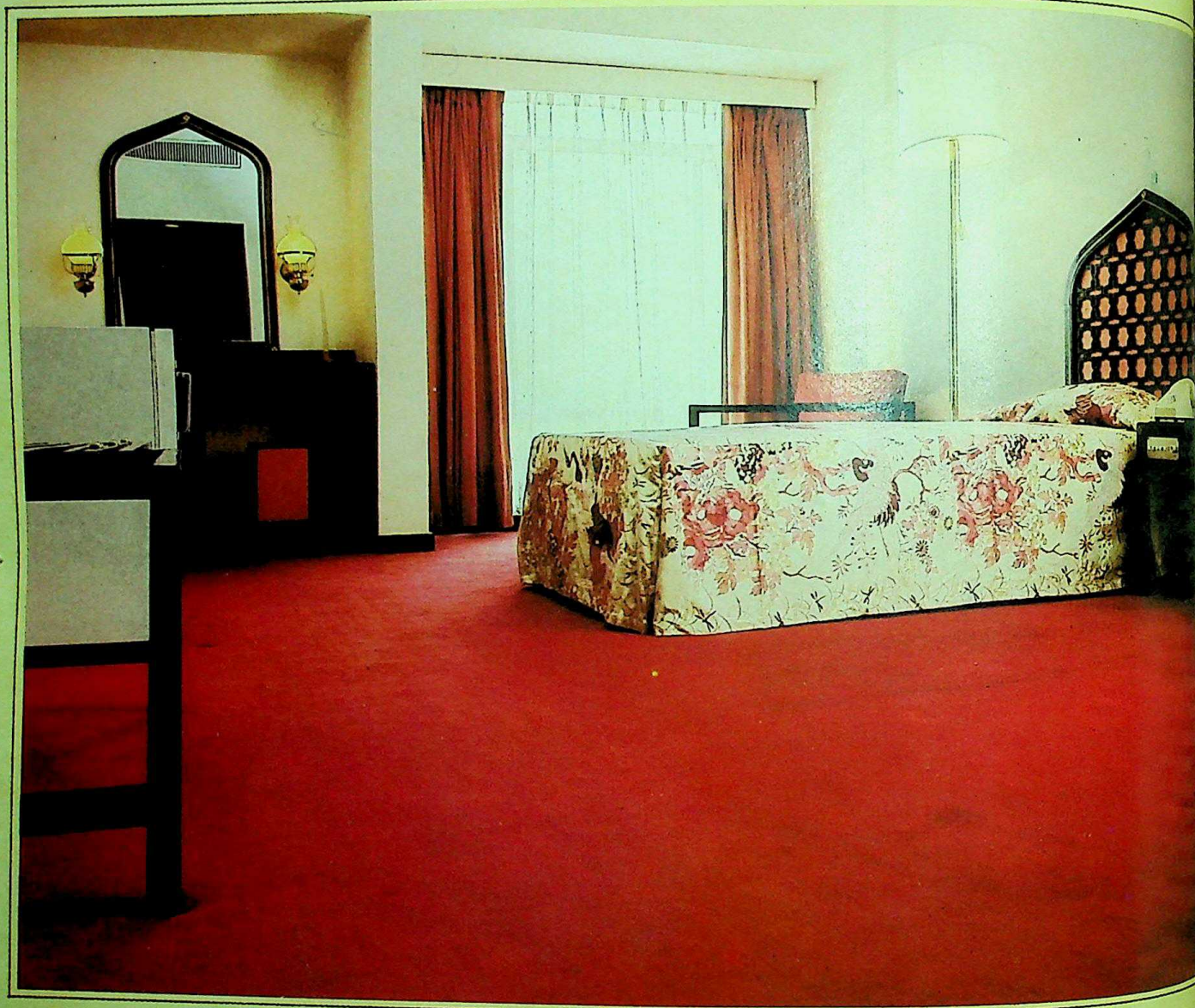
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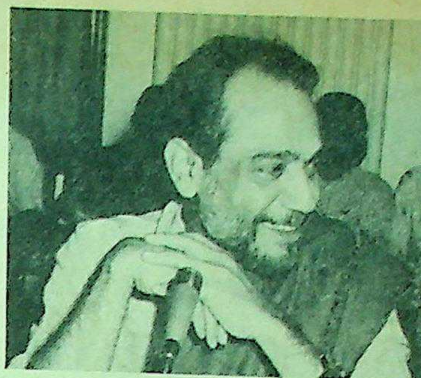
Chakraborty: Weaving A Magic Spell

Sri Sabavala: Moments of Mysticism

Photography

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAGHU RAI

DECEMBER 15, 1983



Karnataka

By last week, it seemed certain that beleaguered Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde had for the moment survived the Congress(I)'s crude attempts to topple his Government, but only just. For, with C.M. Stephen reaffirming his party's intention to topple Hegde's fragile coalition even after the infamous Moily tapes, Hegde's state of siege may have just begun.

Cover Story • Page 64



The Royal Visit

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II almost stole the show from the Commonwealth Heads of Government whose New Delhi summit coincided with the Queen's state visit to India. Accompanied by Prince Philip the Queen blitzed through a crowded programme with not a hair out of place—unlike her spokesmen or the British media that faithfully dogged her footsteps all around the country.

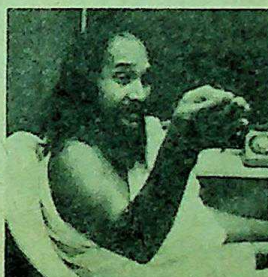
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Punjab

The brutal slaying of four Hindu bus travellers once again took tension in that troubled state to a new high. Despite the massive deployment of security forces in the state and the recent crackdown on extremists, naked fear walks the streets of Punjab. With attitudes remaining adamant on both sides in the confrontation, Punjab by last week looked set for a long and bloody journey, leading nobody knows where.

Current Events • Page 26



Dhirendra Brahmachari

After months of relative obscurity, Dhirendra Brahmachari was again revelling in controversy. In what he claimed was a "political vendetta", his Shiva Gun Factory in Jammu was raided by Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah last fortnight. The raid revealed allegedly serious irregularities and illegally imported gun barrels.

Current Events • Page 34



Nationalised Banks

Indian banks are in trouble, faced with mounting cases of fraud, scandals at the top, hopeless arrears in basic accounting, and in some cases a dangerous erosion of profits. The system clearly suffers from some serious shortcomings, for the headline-hitting scandals are only a symptom of more deep-seated maladies.

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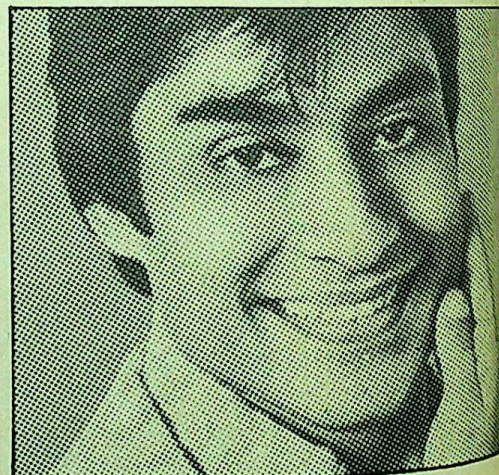
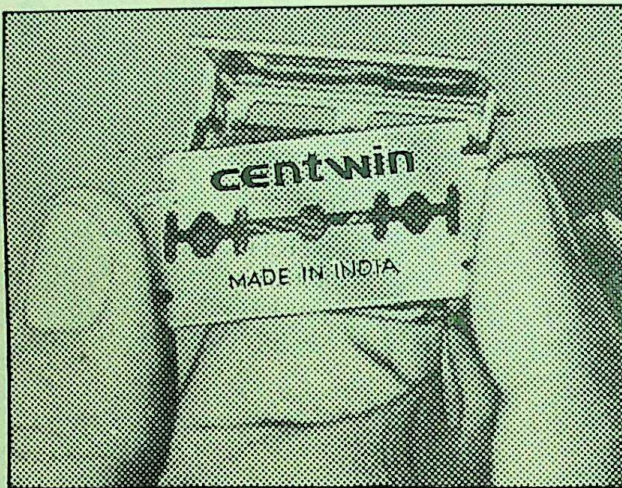
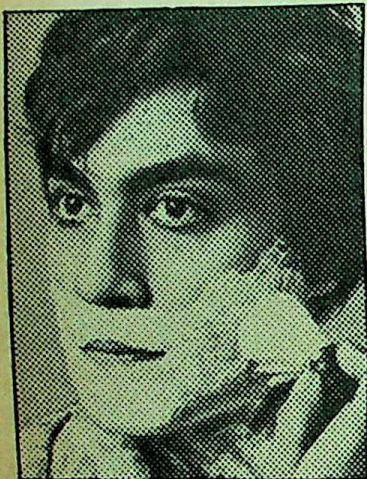
Tamil Repatriates

The pact signed between the then prime ministers of India and Sri Lanka, almost 20 years ago on the repatriation of Tamils from Sri Lanka is not quite the success it was originally made out to be. An exclusive survey among repatriates reveals an anger at their current situation which, they claim, is far worse than it was in Sri Lanka.

Special Report • Page 106

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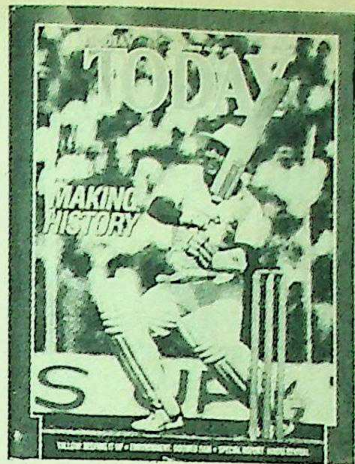
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THE RUN MACHINE

Had there been a Nobel Prize in sports, the committee would not have hesitated in giving it to Sunil Gavaskar ("Making History", November 30). Statisticians have been amazed more by this 'Little Master' than Miss Universe! I for one would rather count the stars than the runs accumulated by this run-machine—it is far more easier to do so.

Hyderabad

N. Ramesh

■ The difference between Gavaskar and Bradman is only the difference between super and superb.

Gorakhpur

Jayant Mukherjee

■ Gavaskar provided all the oxygen and blood to the Indian cricket edifice and raised it to the dizzy heights of popularity. Despite being discarded from the captaincy, he remained unruffled. While equalling Sir Don's record, he underlined the fact that one not only needs skill and talent but determination and the will to reach the top.

New Delhi

Shashi Kant Gupta

■ After breaking so many cricket records, Gavaskar insists that "I just go out and play". This shows his honesty, concentration and dedication to the game. Long live our own Bradman!

Bombay

Umesh Khugaonkar

■ Raj Kumar Dungarpur has aptly rechristened Sunil Manohar Gavaskar as Sunil Manohar Recordkar. India ought to be proud of the man who has now become the highest scorer of runs in the history of Test cricket.

Chandigarh

Prem Singh

■ When a cricketer is judged by the number of runs scored and centuries made, Sunil Gavaskar's apex position in the field is unquestionable. However, if it comes to batting under pressure or the number of Tests a batsman has saved, then it is Vishwanath

who square-drives Sunny to the (de)fence!
Bangalore

Ramanand Sharma

■ I appeal to Gavaskar through your columns to think of retiring only after hitting at least 10,000 runs in Tests. I would like him to hit at least 36 centuries. He can do both before he is 38.

Madras

V.N. Narayanaswamy

■ The cover story was a real tribute to the Little Master for his magnificent performance.

Ahmedabad

H.B. Antani

NOT CATCHING

By publishing eye-catchers like the one on Gauri and Ambar (November 30), you are not giving us the value for our money.

Falna

Surendra Gulzar

BIG BEEF

Indian politicians seem to believe that discovering a new controversial issue like beef tallow does more for national unity than coming up with solutions to the Assam and Punjab problems (Comment, November 30). As you've pointed out, beef tallow has been in use in India for two decades and most people know about it. The Congress(I) and the Janata Party are blaming each other for it, but what are we supposed to do? It is now up to the politicians to defuse this tallow bomb soon because we can ill-afford a Hindu Bhindranwale.

Ahmedabad

Ketan Yagnik

CABINET CAPERS

It is true that most of the new ministers in Bihar have a sullied image ("Expansion Backlash", November 30). By inducting corrupt people into the Cabinet it seems that the Government is rewarding them for the corruption. Whatever happened to the Government's recent announcement that all those with tainted reputations will be dismissed from the ministry?

Patna

Dr K.P. Singh

HEALTH HAZARD

The only way the Government can stop the so-called health clubs ("Parlour Games", November 30) from doing a booming business is by restricting flesh trade to one area in Madras, like it is in Bombay's Falkland Road.

Madras

M. Haroon Rasheed

BOMBAY BLUES

Bombay once enjoyed the reputation of being the "Jewel of the East", but it has lost all its splendour ("Bombay on the Brink", November 15). The poor live in wretched slums. The middle class live in murky hovels, eat devitaminised food with no

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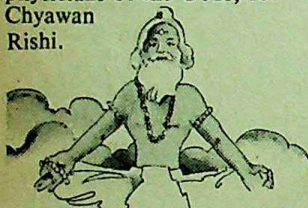
Far too many people believe that a health tonic is meant only for those who are sick.

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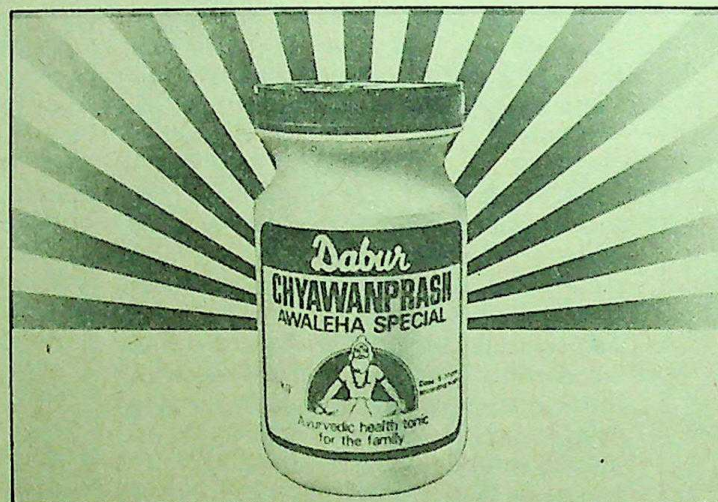
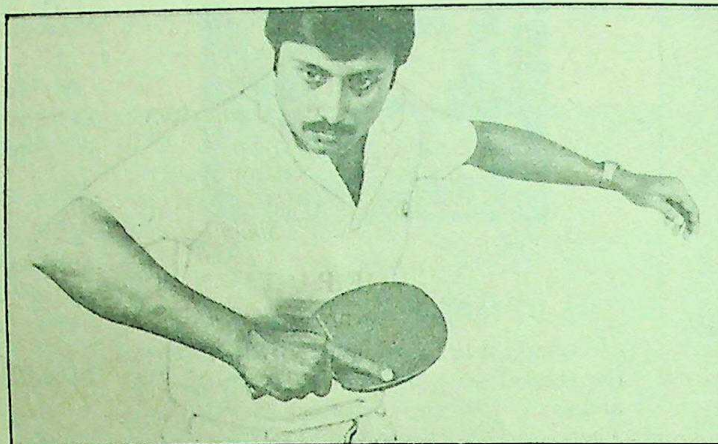


Its powers were so amazing that the rishis began calling it 'the elixir of life'. They believed that it built up resistance to illness, kept body tissues young and the mind alert and active.

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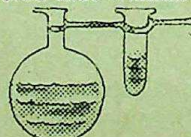
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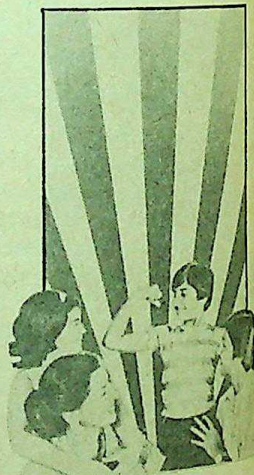
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TTERS

er place even for relieving. Now that you brought this to the nation's notice, somebody will do something about it.

Hasan S. Sitabkhan

Bombay—these days better known as Bombay—is a nightmare for the rich and the alike. Undoubtedly, the Government's vested interests are responsible for the congestion. Decongestion is the only answer. When the textile mills wanted to shift out, the Government shot down the proposal. Government has come to such a pass that people no longer believe that the authorities are capable of setting things right.

S.E. Meerza

Your cover story has rightly zoomed the woes and worries of Bombay. Once a great city, it has now become a city of slums, messes and street squatters. Can anybody save Bombay?

S.G. Agte

Bombay is a city opposed to all human ideals. The city's film industry produces films that depict sex, violence and to an alarming degree. Its textile mills produce synthetic cloth which is affecting our cottage industries. Its advertising agencies create ads which show the ideal Indian man as being one with a fair skin, brown hair and dressed in western clothes. Bombay cannot be saved morally too. But, maybe, it's

Aban Bana

I have a six-point formula to save Bombay:

1. Stop influx of fresh migrants to the city by making suitable laws.

2. Shift all major establishments, like head offices of banks, railways, Life Insurance Corporation, Shipping Corporation of India, Foreign Trade Corporation of India etc to Bombay or to the Bandra-Kurla

area. Shift all the worn-out mills out of Bombay and provide accommodation for them at new locations.

3. Shift all rail and truck terminals to Bandra-Kurla area.

4. Establish a good railway station and shopping counter at New Bombay to make it an attraction magnet. All wholesale markets for cloth, vegetables, spices, cereals etc should be shifted to New Bombay.

5. Establish enough schools, colleges, shopping centres and recreational

K.V. Satyamurty

It is for lack of something better that "The Stage" was featured in the Arts

section (November 15)? There is a lot happening in the arts that's more meaningful than the mundane and gimmick-ridden affair like Amitabh Bahahan's. You would do well to leave such coverage to magazines of suspect intelligence and give your readers something that has substance.

New Delhi

Ashish Khokar

CARDIN FANTASY

Just reading about Pierre Cardin and his creations (November 15) gave me a feeling of elegance. I hope the Cardin fantasy will be a reality in India which has a vast market and resources to be explored.

Calcutta

Soumitra Dey

TREASURING THE PAST

The Central Government should order an inquiry into why the jewels of Kashmir (November 15) were kept hidden in a vault and remained secret for so many years. There's no harm in getting them valued by experts but they must not be sold because they represent history and a solid proof of the life-style and glory of the days of Indian kings and maharajahs.

Bombay

Quaid Z. Najmi

AESTHETIC AWARENESS

Your article on the Belgian Embassy, designed by Satish Gujral (November 15) is a service to society. Public awareness regarding the physical environment, whether it be architecture or its allied fields, is of utmost importance in setting higher standards of excellence. The creation of an awake, opinionated public depends much upon the exposure it receives to such issues as are maligning a large portion of our urban environment. Examples of works contributing to the urban fabric, too, go a long way towards generating a desire to experience a qualitative improvement in the physical setting around oneself.

New Delhi

Avik Roy

■ Satish Gujral's building is sculpture, not architecture. It is no more than a beautiful piece of jewellery. He says that a building should stand as an image to rejuvenate you. But it is difficult to see what image inspired the design of the Belgian Embassy. Its exterior looks more like a cross between the arches of the Link Road Burning Ghat and the burial tombs of ancient Egypt—buildings to die in rather than sculptures to live in. The embassy building represents in all its grossness and vulgarity what a building should not be—an ego trip for the artist and the client. Gujral has very successfully reduced architecture to mere sculpture, an object of art. Devote less space to such frivolous ventures and more to the real issues of architecture.

New Delhi

Gautam Bhatia

RICH REWARDS

The poverty-stricken countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have become the hunting grounds for art collectors of the rich countries of Europe and America ("Diamonds Are Forever," November 15). All the world's rarest artefacts will inevitably migrate to these countries. The only consolation is that these objects may be better preserved there than in the countries of their origin.

Calcutta

R. Guha

COURTING TROUBLE

Apropos the article "Unsettling Precedent", (November 15) about the transfer of Justice P. Subramaniam Poti to the Gujarat High Court and the boycotting of the court by the lawyers it is very clear that the Congress(I) Government wants a committed judiciary, captive press, yesmen, a spineless bureaucracy, sycophants and politicians loyal only to "her" and her progeny to establish her dynastic rule in the democratic socialist India.

Bangalore

Jayaram

FOLLOWING THE CHIEF

You criticised N.T. Rama Rao for making the party a family concern ("A Crucial Battle," November 15). But it is nothing new for us. He is just following in the footsteps of the Nehru family who have been making the entire nation and the Congress party a family concern since more than three decades.

Why is Rajiv treated as he is... why does the press give the Gandhi family so much unwarranted coverage... why are they telecast on Doordarshan at prime time?

The answers to the above questions are in the reply to your criticism of Rama Rao giving room to his family members.

Mrs Gandhi defends the monopoly of the Nehru family by saying that they have served India with dedication, sincerity and hard work—as if they are the only people capable of doing this. Why does Mrs Gandhi not put forward into politics any other person (from outside her family) who has the above qualities?

Bakhtaran, Iran

K.J. Reddi

SHAMELESS TACTICS

In reference to your article "Bidding for Power" (November 15), the shameless and unethical tactics employed to topple any elected government are disgusting and scorn-worthy. Defection is a cancer to democracy. It destabilises the stable government. Hence defection must be banned at any cost and only the people can come to the rescue by forcing the Government to enact legislation to prevent the evil.

Mehsana, Gujarat

K.K. Chaudhary

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INDIA
TODAY
THE COMPLETE NEWS MAGAZINE

Mocking Democracy

A SOCIETY now and then is privileged to catch a rare glimpse of the slugs that lie hidden under the stone. But when it does, it must pause to reflect upon the ugliness that stands exposed. In the recent past, this happened once before when the exposure of Abdul Rehman Antulay's machinations revealed the sordid nexus between politicians and a certain kind of businessman. Now the Moily tapes, which show the reach of money power in the making and unmaking of governments, provide another occasion for introspection.

This is not the time for the prime battering ram of the Congress(I) C.M. Stephen to trot out the party's pious justifications and scream for Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hedge's blood. Toppling governments is as old as politics and sure enough there

has been room for persuasion in the toppling game. But what kind of persuasion? Of politics and principle? Or of money, as is the case in Karnataka if the Moily tapes are genuine? Politics is already floundering in a sea of cynicism.

Such justifications as the one trotted out by Stephen have never been spelt out in such self-righteous terms.

Stephen defends the indefensible, for the only reason that such sums can be put on the table is that public office has been commercialised and the money

will be recouped many times over when the topplers form the government.

Obviously, the destabilising activities of the Congress(I) in Jammu & Kashmir are part of this philosophy to topple at

any cost and wherever necessary, a philosophy which finds inspiration from the upcoming general election some time next year.

The party that rules at the Centre knows it is fighting a rearguard battle and must have control over as many power centres as possible if it is to come through the next electoral test.

Stephen's remarks also smack of crude double standards; after all, his mentor Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is the most vocal proponent of her government.

But a debate on such issues would be a pointless market-brawl, a puerile quarrel which would beg the real issue. What is, how is it possible to insulate politics from the machinations of the moneybags, from the politicians who walk the

streets looking out for those who can pay their feed, and from the unprincipled party machines which grind away to distort the

exercise of choice of a sovereign electorate?

The Karnataka episode, so far the most brazen exposure of the effort to distort the people's verdict, makes it all the more

apparent that politicians from all parts of the spectrum pay particular attention to the efforts being made by the Election Commission to hammer out a consensus on electoral reform.

The Government, in its typically confused way, seeks to protect its position. Law Minister Jagannath Kaushal's assertion last week that he couldn't "light-heartedly tinker with the

system that has stood the test of time" was ridiculous in the context of the Karnataka incidents. What is needed now is not alibis and fatuous excuses, but action on a whole range of grey areas. Several eminent jurists and concerned citizens have made suggestions, ranging from packages which call for sweeping electoral reforms such as proportional representation in Parliament, to tinkering with the existing laws such as enhancing the limit on election expenses.

ALL SUCH ideas deserve serious discussion. But some need to be tackled with the greatest possible urgency such as the cost of elections, the collection of political funds and defections. It is no secret that each and every elected legisla-

tor starts his life as a representative of the people by swearing a lie when he says under oath that his poll expenses were within the paltry limits of Rs 35,000 for a Lok Sabha contest and Rs 10,000 for an assembly election. It is, equally, plain as daylight that the collection of funds for political parties has become a shadowy, under the table, arm-twisting or mutual back-scratching affair and probably the single most powerful source of energy for the generation of black money. And, defections are now regarded as routine political technique in the formation and destruction of governments, never mind what the electorate wanted.

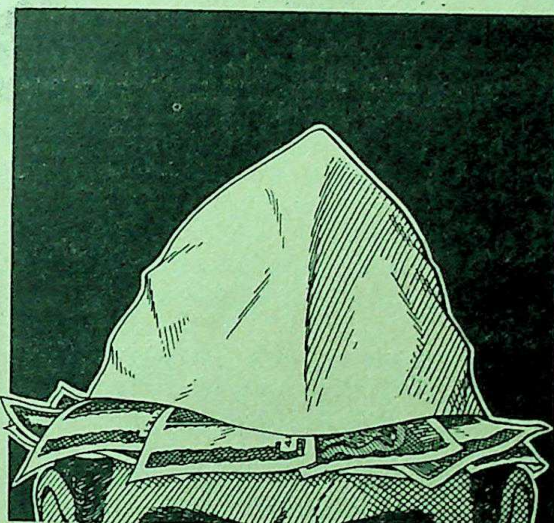
Fortunately, the most urgent issues lend themselves to the simplest solutions—provided the country's law makers show enough courage to pull themselves out of the morass into which they are sliding. It does not take much imagination to recognise that:

- The limit on election expenses must be raised substantially to come closer in line with the real cost of conducting expenses, which run to lakhs rather than tens of thousands of rupees. There is merit in the Election Commission's proposal that state assistance be provided with certain safeguards and conditions.

- Corporate donations, which are being made under the table, should be legalised, and the entire business of fund collection brought into the open with proper auditing. This would eliminate one of the main causes of black money in the economy.

- Candidates who are elected to the Lok Sabha or the various assemblies are elected both for who they are and the parties they represent, and if they wish to change their parties they must resign their seats and go back to the electorate for a fresh mandate under their new party symbol. This would bring into control the unmitigated buying and selling of legislators and the despicable practice of switching horses midstream.

It is already late in the day to expect miracles. But if the Karnataka tapes lesson is not to be lost, it must propel politicians in the direction of electoral reform, not towards Stephen's absurd logic which mocks the democratic process.



THE
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1983

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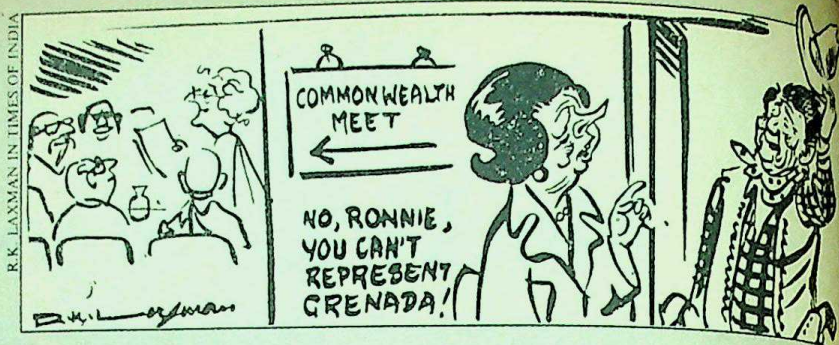
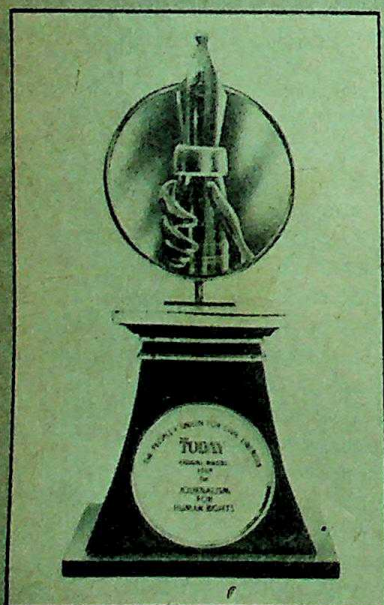
The report must have been published during 1983 in an Indian newspaper or magazine. A national jury of eminent men of letters, citizens and journalists will assess each story.

Entries in any Indian language other than English should be accompanied by an English translation.

Last date for receiving entries
7th January 1984.

Entries should be sent to:

The
Executive Secretary
People's Union for
Civil Liberties
15 Teen Murti Lane
New Delhi - 110011



➤ Every dictator, every tinpot dictator wants to be loved, wants people to love nice people they are. That is why Mrs Gandhi, during the Emergency, was desperate for good headlines abroad. The same goes for Zia (ul-Haq).

—Salman Rushdie in *Sunday*

➤ Karunakaran opens his mouth only for two things: to eat and to tell lies.
—Swami Vidyānanda Saraswati of Kasi Mutt quoted in *The Hindu*

➤ Whenever there is mention of coalition government... the image that I see often is the one of a chariot drawn at once by a wolf, a pig, a donkey and a bullock with a monkey in the charioteer's seat.

—Prafull Goradia, a Congress(I) think-tank member quoted in *The Hindustan Times*

➤ It is our fault that we allowed them (regional parties) to come up by giving them governments.

—Rajiv Gandhi at a press conference in *Sunday*

➤ I don't contribute to the opinion that Mrs Gandhi always springs surprises. I think she is first surprised by her own opinions and then surprises others.

—Cho Ramaswamy in *The Times of India*

➤ (Veerappa) Moily is nervous.... His accusations now are to show Delhi that he is active. He seldom talks sense.

—Ramakrishna Hegde in *Prabhu*

➤ (Salman Rushdie) did an injustice to compare in any form, a man of great intellect like Bhutto and... a butcher like Zia.

—Jam Sadiq Ali, Pakistan People's Party member in *The Illustrated Weekly*

➤ Ever since Mrs Gandhi came to power... religious charlatans, including impostors and self-styled swamis have begun to acquire key positions.... This practice has been emulated by almost every cabinet minister with the result that a tantrik is today more influential in the corridors of power than a secretary to the Government.

—K.R. Sundar Rajan in *The Sunday Observer*

➤ I seek an (immediate) election because it will give an opportunity to the people to cast irresponsible political leaderships into the dung heaps of history.

—Erasmio De Sequeira in *Orion*

➤ Sleeping in the House is not unparliamentary unless the member is also snoring at the same time).

—Balram Jakhar in *Parliament* after a member was found sleeping during question time

➤ Mrs Gandhi has put her distaste for the press on record times without number. This is a tribute to its independence that the Indian press does not fully deserve.

—S. Mulgaokar at the JP memorial lecture held in *New Delhi*

➤ To many of them (festival directors and I & B ministry officials) an international film festival was merely a mysterious annual holiday from censorship, whose good had to be equitably distributed among the general public.

—Chidananda Dasgupta in *The Indian Express*

➤ The only thing I don't like about her (Parveen Babi) is that she "Sirs" me all the time. Another thing I don't like is that she smokes. I don't like girls who smoke.

—Shashi Kapoor in *Express*



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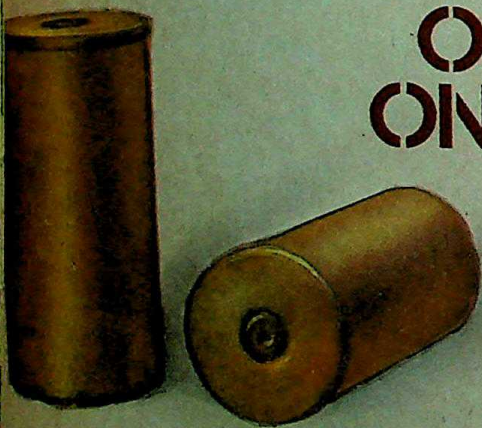


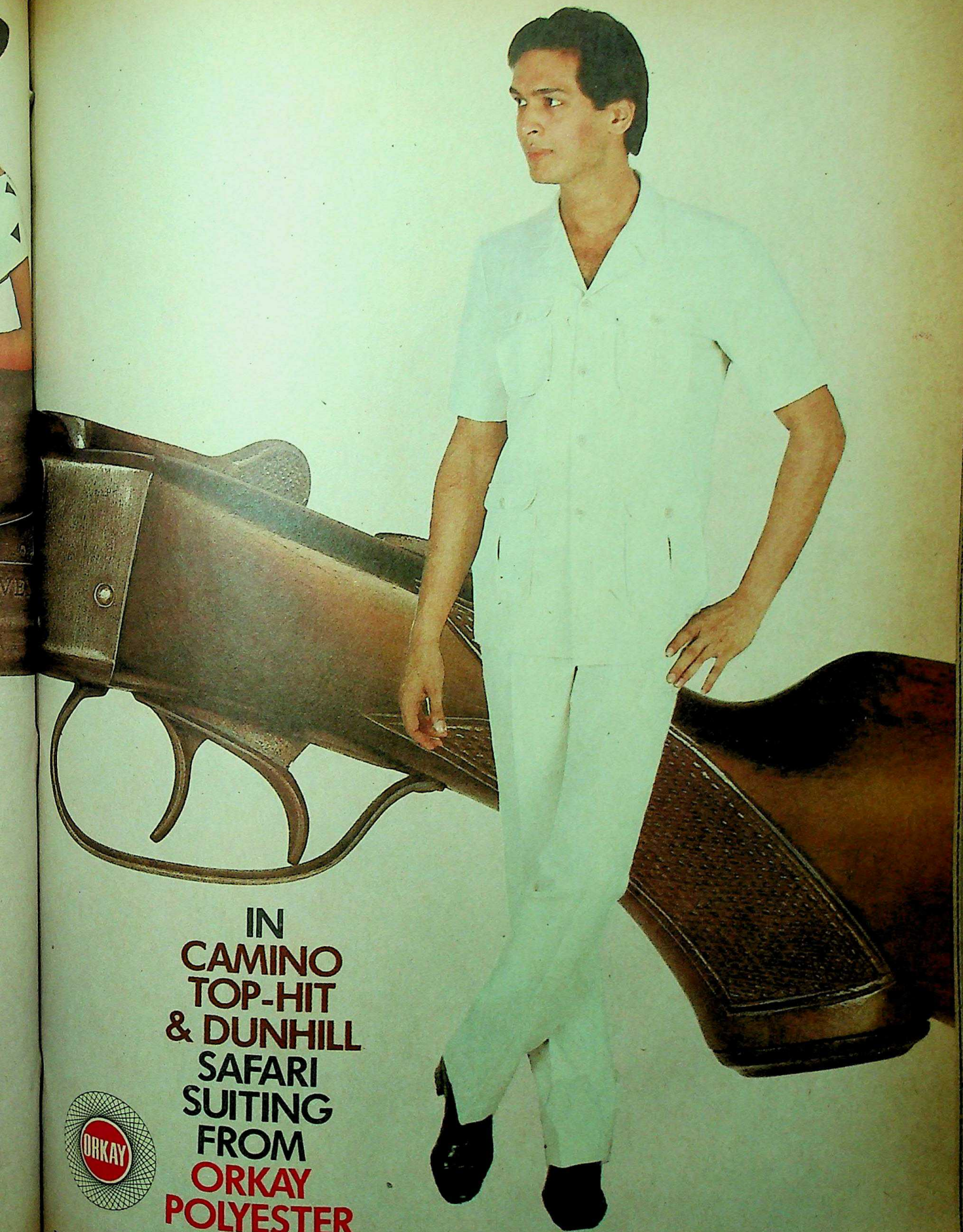
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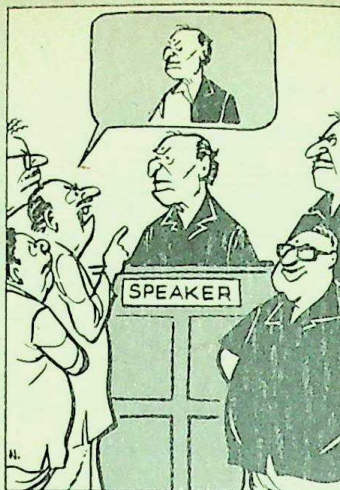


DRESS SENSE

■ In their zeal to represent the people, the elected representatives of the people will leave no stone unturned, no avenue unexplored and, as the citizens of Madras discovered last fortnight, or at least that fraction of them present in the visitors' gallery at that time, no dress untried.

K. Rajaram is speaker of the Tamil Nadu Assembly and one Thursday he turned up in the chamber wearing a

shirt in unrelieved black. The colour was due to the fact that the ruling AIADMK has decided to wear black until the Sri Lanka Tamils issue is solved. This, however, went down badly with legislators of the DMK kind who, as soon as the speaker put to vote a resolution on a breach of privilege charge, started off in a chorus, asking, in melodic syllables, that the speaker remove his shirt. Said N.V.N. Somu, their leader: "As long as you wear your black shirt you will act



only like a partyman the AIADMK members—Somu."

This went on for some time. Rajaram at first kept all stoically but later, in a stentorian protest, said convincingly: "What do you have you to ask me to remove my black shirt? I can wear whatever shirt I want. Is there any rule on the colour of the shirt the speaker should wear?" That was what he was tellin' 'em, for, of course, he isn't.

GREENER GRASS

■ The gardener, it is said, and most lyrically too by several poets, is closest to nature, for in his gentle charge are some of the most glorious specimens of that lady's bounty—the point is that he's got a peach of a job. There is, unfortunately, at least one of the mud-smeared tribe—in Patna, Bihar—who would feel that nature's blessings are, well, mixed.

Last month this gentle-



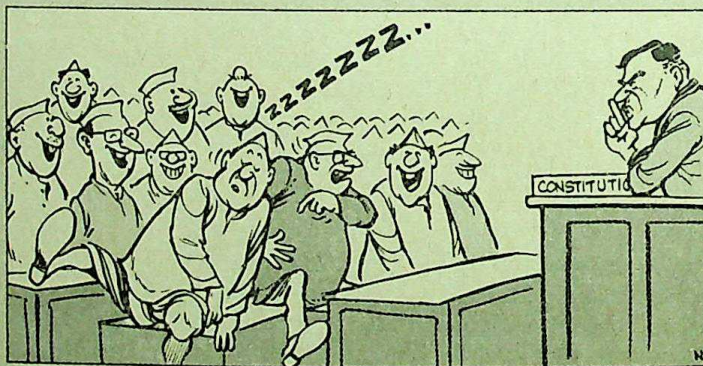
man's house was raided by a number of people who stomped into his house saying that they were Excise and had a search warrant and wanted to sniff about his house. Might was right for the moment and the householder let them do it. But try as they might, they could not find a single incriminating gold biscuit in the place. Their efforts frustrated, they suddenly turned their attention to a beautiful plant in a pot, just then in full flower.

That's ganja, said one.

Yes, indeed, that's what he echoed another. Yet a third pointed out that it was ganja. So they looked at the gardener in the eye, picked the ganja plant, and ran away in their jeep, the generous growth perched on the driver's head. And there was the gardener, who had always been under the impression that he had been nurturing a hardy sort of zinnia, was chagrined and sheeted under the Excise. What price nature's bounty now?

BEDTIME

■ The proceedings of the Lok Sabha, with hundreds of honourable members trying to convince other honourable members that their point of view is the best, can be quite exhausting. So it is not entirely unexpected to find one or two dropping off, as someone did last fortnight. His slumber



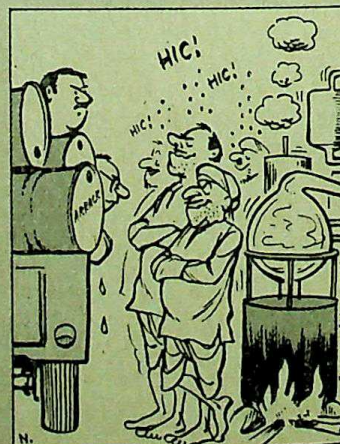
did not go unnoticed, however, because his neighbour, disturbed by a weight on his shoulder, complained to the speaker. The speaker rose immediately to the occasion, ruling that honourable members may sleep but may not snore. The howl of laughter that greeted this verdict effectively roused the gentleman from his slumber.

SELF-HELP

■ A particularly sanctimonious moral, dear to the disciples of Samuel Smiles, is that if you give a man a fish, he will have a full belly for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, he will have a full belly all the days of his life. Apart from the fact that that advice would be welcomed with tears of joy by the few inhabitants of the Sahara, it can lend itself to quite curious interpretations,

as in the translation by the residents of 11 villages in Hosahalli panchayat in Karnataka. They want no fish, they want arrack.

For some time now the villagers, who dearly love a nice warming tot of arrack after a hard day's labour in the fields, have been fuming at the high prices of what is, after all, one of the cheapest drinks ever to KO a liver: they allege that the contractors and the Government were locked in a foul



conspiracy to wring money out of them. No action without intoxication, they said, and came up with a scheme that the Government would have Smiles upon its side, decided to set up their own distilleries. The message appears, spread to quite a number of neighbouring villages and was the final gesture of protest. Ryota Sangh said it would be up an arrack plant on the highway. One for the road.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH D.

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THE QUEEN

The Royal Roundabout

THOUGH the Indian Government was always at pains to point out that the nine-day state visit of the Queen of England was no different from that of any other head of state, the elaborate arrangements and excessive detailing of the royal tour was undoubtedly meant to be the crowning glory of CHOGM. From the desperate last-minute efforts to put on the ritz at Rashtrapati Bhavan to the bitter squabble that broke out over the guest list for the governor's banquet in Hyderabad, the Queen's progress at times seemed like one more soap opera on the Raj being filmed by BBC television.

Still, it remained a source of wonderment to most—and embarrassment to some—that a middle-aged, matronly-looking and thoroughly mundane woman who utters no more than basic exclamations ("how'd' do", "how kind", "oh, really") and makes the vaguest of speeches, should arouse so much public interest. Much spiel has already been delivered on the Queen's status as head of the Commonwealth, her sentimental association with India and the vast amount her Government spends yearly to keep the monopoly of her rule afloat. Not much has been said about the fact that she provides, at home and when travelling abroad, terrific entertainment. Anachronism she may be in the last quarter of the 20th century but the responses she evokes and the dither she causes remain a diversion from what, at the presidential banquet in her honour, she called our "restless and imperfect world".

Last fortnight, as she dutifully trudged

around India (hatted and gloved in the heat and dust) INDIA TODAY Correspondent SUNIL SETHI was jostling in the sea of ADC's and secretaries, equerries and groupies, muck-rakers and cordon-breakers that follows in her wake. His first-person report:

AT PALAM Airport, a well-modulated quiver of anticipation went up in the press enclosure as the Queen's Tristar jet taxied along the runway. The lady re-

porters were craning their necks to get details of the royal departure. As guns boomed in salute and a wondrous combination of his brooding eyes, his sherwani were designed to shatter at any distance) propelled her along the carpet, speculation was rife among the "Strawberry," said a lady scribe, "taking down the colour scheme maybe," said a second, keen to put an instant theory, while a third was eager inquiries about the hat. A tall-haired English figure was seen rushing the enclosure, having obtained the close during the ceremonial. "Tangerine

PHOTOGRAPH BY BHAWAN SINGH



(Clockwise from below); the Queen escorted in palanquin at St. Thomas' School; with Mrs Gandhi at Rashtrapati Bhavan and watching folk dancers in a village near Hyderabad



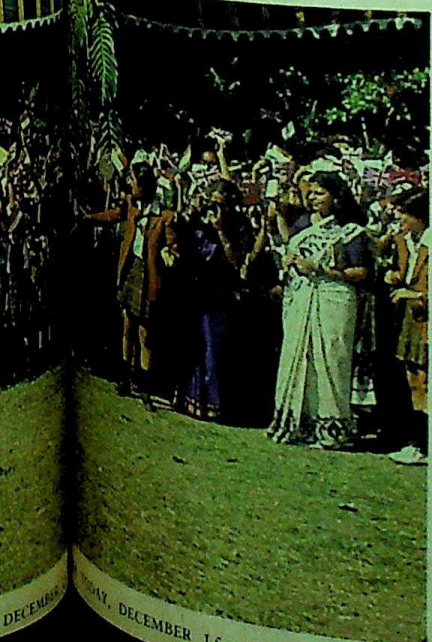
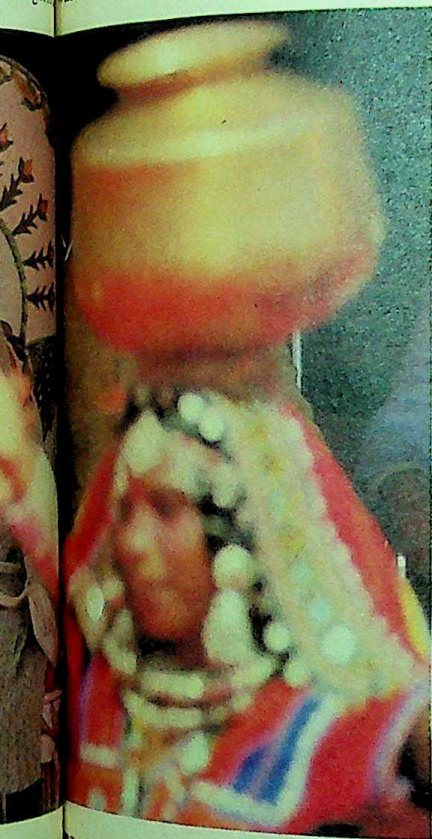
...triumphantly, his moustache twit-
 ing in thrill. "it's tangerine with mauve
 white flowers." The lady reporters were
 "The hat, the hat," cried the one
 a fixed job of work. "What's it made
 "Straw ect'ally," said the Englishman
 his composure.
 "And the dress? What material?"
 "Crepe de chine, ect'ally."
 Presuming it to be the Queen's dresser,
 lady-in-waiting perhaps since very often
 look like men and have lately known to
 come lax in mode of dress, I asked: "Are
 the Queen's designer?"
 "No, ect'ally. Just another reporter."
 as, as I later found out, the Delhi-based

correspondent of *The Times* of London
 informing the world that the Queen had
 landed in India. Next morning the Indian
 press had its say, when *The Statesman* an-
 nounced her arrival with "Prince Philip erect
 as ever".

Grand Reception: Meanwhile, back in
 the corridors of power they were not only
 bending backwards to please Her Majesty,
 they were performing somersaults of joy.
 Which meant that, as far as the press was
 concerned, it was just a matter of presenting
 the cold shoulder and stiff upper lip. Details
 of the Queen's visit were being treated as
 state secrets. Partly this was for reasons of
 security. And partly because, the British

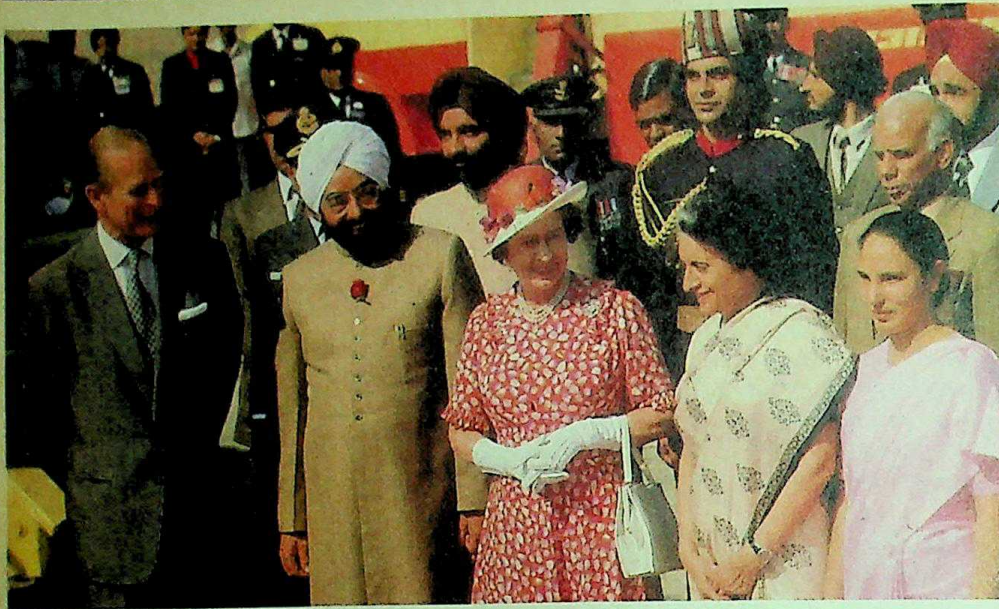
monarch being a woman of many parts,
 anyone who comes close to a part likes to
 hold it close to his chest.

At Rashtrapati Bhavan, a high-power-
 ed four-member committee of women was
 for six months closeted in refurbishing the
 suites for the royal party. The four—Mrs
 Gandhi's daughter-in-law, Sonia, her officer
 on special duty Usha Bhagat and Bhagat's
 sister Urmila Kapur joined by the wife of
 CHOGM chief coordinator Natwar Singh—
 had been instructed to keep their mouths
 shut and open them only to speak the
 Government line. Oh, nothing special for
 the Queen, they had been taught to say, the
 old place needed some doing up anyway.

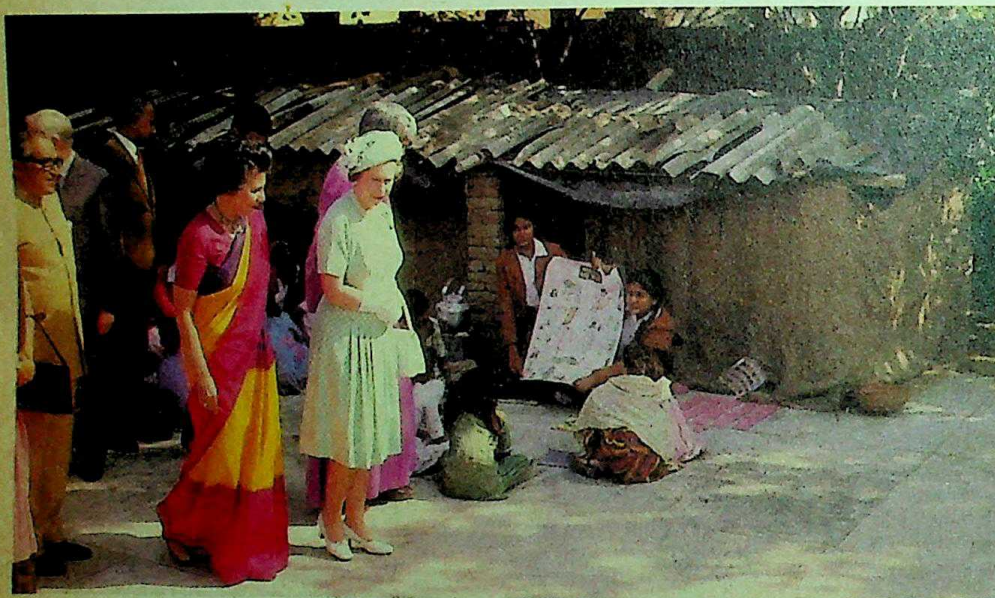


DECEMBER 15, 1983





The Royal couple with Zail Singh, Mrs Gandhi and Manjit Kaur at Palam Airport



Surveying school children doing community service



St. Thomas' School children welcoming the Queen

Lavish Setting: In the Dwarka where the Queen was staying, new curtains had gone up and a magnificently printed of the Taj Mahal, newly laid mirrorwork, placed over the royal suite and the neighbouring Nalanda Suite and the Duke of Edinburgh and connected by a set of double doors (the Queen shared bedrooms, except as it turned their wedding anniversary in Hyderabad when news got out and the British turned delirious with pleasure) was in colours of muted gold. Six cities—the Godavari, Mysore, Tagore, Pepsu and Bombay—were face-lift to accommodate select members of the Queen's household such as her and private secretary.

At Hyderabad House, the sandstone mansion designed by the last Nizam near India Gate, the building assumed epic proportions. For a year, two professional designers, Richard and Sunita Kohli, have been engaged in the place, as one Ministry of Affairs official admitted "into the premier guest-house". Anything for the Queen? No, no, of course not.

Expressly for the use of the banquet for heads of state the principal room and dining-room had undergone a morous upheaval. A six-foot plaster lined in mirrors had been put in the Italian-marbled foyer, fabulous collections of old lithographs had been gathered along the sweep of the grand Mughal miniatures of flowers were in the upper foyers.

The first-floor ballroom, its walls in panels of Paisley-patterned silk, was formed into a rich profusion of Persian carpets, marquetry coffee tables and chandeliers with pink shades. In the dining state dining-room, the brass and chandeliers had been shone to light eight round tables seating 10 each for heads of state banquet. At the enquiry, however, official voices rose in chorus of demur. All this was not for the Queen—it was "part of the restoration of Hyderabad House", they med.

Special Arrangements: Luckily the British High Commission they were no such claims. Everything was letting the Queen, though they were letting details. After some trouble, they let names of the principal members of the household accompanying the Queen. They had two ladies-in-waiting, her secretary, her press secretary, her equerry and captain of her flight.

In addition, the 30-odd members of the household, valets, footmen. "And of course", said

the High Commission's new press secretary stiffly. "the high commissioner and count as members of Her Majesty's household during the course of the visit." He held like a man under great stress. After the royal enquiry to ask if it were true (it was) and enquiry and cutlery was being flown from Buckingham Palace along with the Queen's banquet, his voice was strangled on the phone. "See you at the press briefing," I said fully to calm him down. "If I don't have a nervous breakdown," he replied. The idea of Nash's imminent collapse confirmed later when, at the official Press Secretary Michael (a man with grey hair, grey suit and grey voice) referred to him "as our and bolts man in New Delhi". Behaving walking advertisement for the recently-

formed RSPCJ (The Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty by Journalists), Shea, as the Queen's spokesman, over the years has mastered the art of talking a lot and saying nothing. Two of his favourite expressions are "can't say" and "don't know".

In comparison, his Indian counterpart Salman Haider, joint secretary, external publicity division, is a quieter, younger, self-taught man who had recently taught himself to say to any assembly of journalists: "I won't waste your time with words. I'll leave the floor for Mr Shea." Jointly quizzed, Shea did take the floor. Asked what the Queen was likely to discuss in her private audiences with Commonwealth heads of state, he usefully said: "Matters of state that heads of state discuss."

"Such as?"

"Such as matters of state that are usually discussed between heads of state."

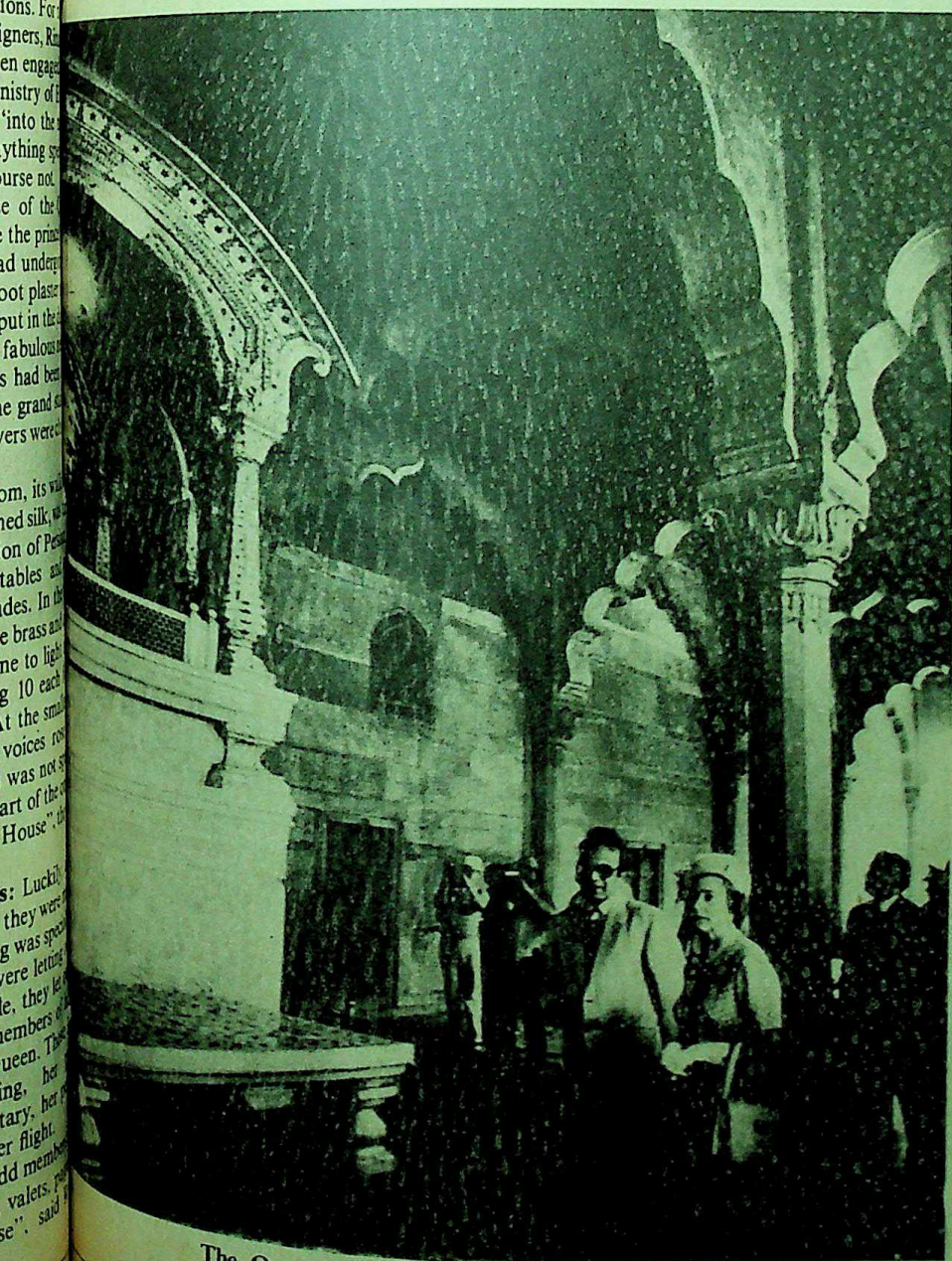
As if such piffle wasn't enough to turn his skin colouring pink from an otherwise uniform grey, when asked if there were any special plans the royal couple had to celebrate their anniversary, it turned indigo. "The royal family are very undemonstrative," he muttered. "They don't do anything special for their anniversaries unlike probably you people. I won't know what you do in India? Do you bring on the dancing girls?"

NEXT day, as the tour properly began with a visit to Raj Ghat, the British media in all its glory—some 40-strong men and women who had accompanied the Queen on her plane for the first time in the history of royal tours—were assembled bare-footed on three sides of Gandhi's samadhi. As expected, the Queen's dress came in for close scrutiny. "God, what's she wearing these days," said a disgusted Kathryn Adie, court correspondent of the BBC (whose radio and television networks alone had despatched 11 people to cover the visit) as the Queen walked by in a green print dress. "Not a hat," explained Adie politely for the benefit of her Indian colleagues wondering about the Queen's headgear. "It's called a toque."

Later during the visit, while perambulating around the 17th century Qutb Shahi tombs outside Hyderabad, I pressed Adie about her growing disenchantment with the Queen's robes. "Well," she replied, "first of all a dreadful old poof called Hardy Amies dresses her. And secondly, after 40 years of dressing specially it doesn't matter what rags you get up in every day, does it?" Nevertheless Adie and her valiant compatriot, Jenny Shields of the *Daily Telegraph* kept up a running commentary on royal rags. "Okay chaps, it's an emerald green and navy dress today with matching green beret and a blue feathered cockade."

It's not only the Queen's clothes that are routinely stripped every morning under the eagle-eyed gaze of veteran reporters. Her facial expressions are taken apart as well. "Watch out boys, she's in her Miss Piggyface mood this morning." Denoted by a furrowing of the royal eyebrow and tightening of lips, the Miss Piggyface expression could mean irritation, exhaustion or plain boredom—about all that can be displayed publicly as royal displeasure.

Demanding Schedule: In the circumstances, public expression of royal pleasure is a rare thing. When daily life is made up of endless handshakes and "how d'dos", when your view of the old city of Delhi from the ramparts of the Red Fort is obstructed by the ceaseless barrage of information pumped by Delhi's lieutenant governor, when your tour of the Pearl Mosque is obliterated by the mind-churning minutiae of Mughal



The Queen being escorted around the Red Fort in New Delhi

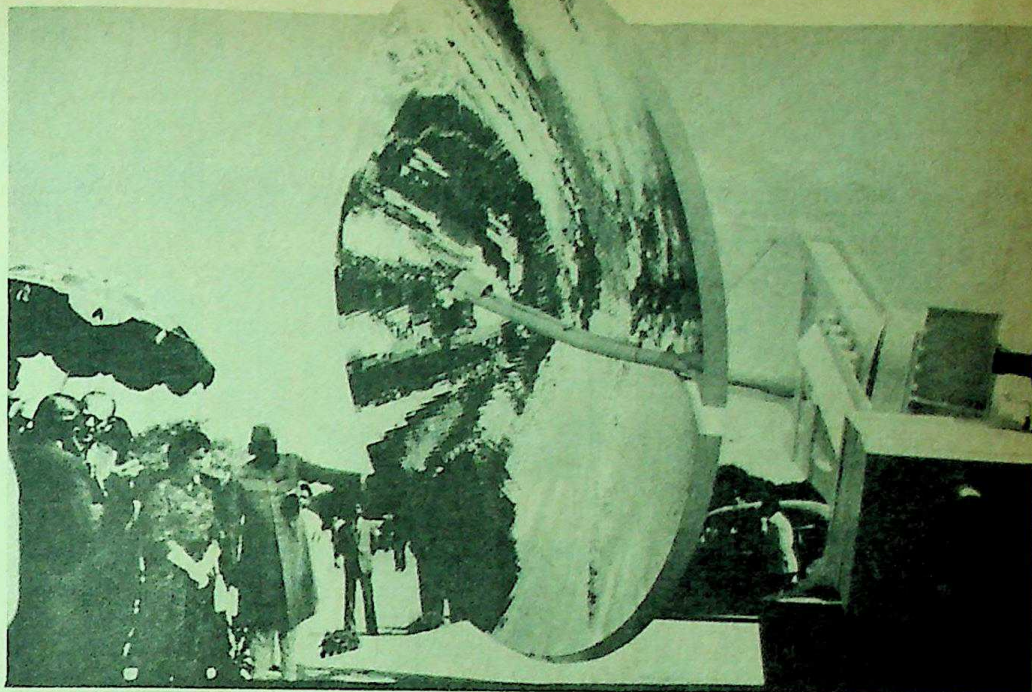
story delivered by the superintending archaeologist, when you are required to sit through audio-visuals of the progress of St Thomas' School in one city and improved methods of growing sorghum in another, babies are likely to wear thin. More so, when every step there is an ever-growing army of cameramen and headline-hunters desperate for daily fodder to keep the presses turning. Among the luminaries of the British media travelling with the Queen were such well-boiled royal observers as James Whitaker of the *Daily Mirror* who once tried to get pictures of a pregnant Lady Diana while she was on a beach holiday in the Caribbean and Harry Arnold of the *Sun* ("The largest-selling newspaper in the English-speaking world," he proudly informed me) who claimed to have bagged an exclusive last interview of Princess Grace of Monaco published a few days after her death. When the Queen's cavalcade in New Delhi coincided with the Mumukshu Bhawan procession organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Arnold's headline in the morning's *Sun* ran: "Mystical men of the East wreck Queen's tour". In one of her outbursts of fury at gross intrusions of the family's privacy the Queen once called them "scum".

To which the acid rejoinder by *The Observer's* columnist Pendennis was: "Not scum, ma'am, but the creme de la scum."

Royal Reception: The arrangements in the capital for the Queen's visit paled in comparison to the goings-on in Hyderabad. For the Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao displayed his famous ear-ring three days in advance. For another, an inter-city flyover that remained incomplete for over two years was finished in three months flat for the Queen to pass over. To cap it all, Centre-State relations suffered another major setback when a nasty row broke out about who was to be invited to Governor Ram Lal's banquet for the Queen.

Elegantly oblivious of all this, in a pearl necklace and chiffon sari, Bilkees Latif, wife of the Maharashtra Governor, I.H. Latif (who very properly put the British High Commissioner in place some months earlier regarding the Queen's visit to Pune) was sitting in the Banjara Hotel tasting the pistachio cake to be served at the banquet. "Some of the celery perhaps as in Vichyssoise," she was crunching pistachios.

As a woman of refinement who happens to belong to old Hyderabad aristocracy she has been requested by the prime minister's Ministry of External Affairs to oversee the arrangements in Hyderabad. In two visits this was her third visit and she was on the Queen and the Duke's eating list. "She doesn't like shellfish, of course, but she's generally fussy; he is," she remarked knowingly, and proceeded to provide



The Royal couple at BHEL's plant in Hyderabad

details of the menu which ended with an ice-cream fantasy made to resemble Charminar.

Massive Expenses: Staying at the Rashtrapati Nilayam (the President's southern retreat where he spends one month each year) the Queen's stay, according to state officials, cost about Rs 12 lakh in refurbishing of the retreat alone. Much more was spent in metalling the city's dismally-maintained roads, in housing her staff (50 rooms at the Banjara were taken up) and providing transport (her cavalcade consisted of at least 30 cars including a Cadillac brought in from Delhi). Not much goodwill, it seemed, was earned by all this. Originally, New Delhi had sent along its own guest list for the governor's banquet. The two state ministers included were the chief minister and his Finance Minister Bhaskara Rao, a man known for his leanings towards the Congress(I).

All bedlam broke loose, with the Telugu Desam accusing the Congress(I) of "playing dinner party politics". In any case, argued Rama Rao, the selection of his cabinet members at dinners should be left to him. Eventually, all members of the Cabinet were invited and over 40 people fed with the Queen.

As she pushed on with her programme next day (visits to the Bharat Heavy Electricals factory to inspect solar energy systems and the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics to peer at high-yield varieties of millet, groundnut and sorghum) the media was heaping abuse on state officials. The British contingent cursed their luck for lack of a story ("who wants the Queen looking at soil specimens and agricultural yields") and the local press were put out because of discrimination—they were kept waiting in a separate room while the foreign media finished lunch first

("We are going to boycott the visit," said one, and many did). Things hardly improved when she was taken to Devara Yamzal village outside the city on the morning of her anniversary.

New Look: With that, the state Government lost whatever remaining credibility there was left of the royal tour. Devara Yamzal, under the tutelage of a strident lady district collector called Janaki Krishnamurthy just back from a year's sabbatical at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Boston, had been dressed to look like no village in India's past, present or future. There were freshly-painted signposts at every corner. Lambadi women in gypsy costume performed a tacky dance. Loudspeakers blared instrumental music. Tourist junk had been brought in from the city to pass off as traditional handicrafts. As the Queen inspected a housing scheme for "weaker sections" and a dispensary and bio-gas plant clean enough to eat off, Krishnamurthy passed on the good word about "integrated rural development". No one was fooled, but then, no one was meant to be. "This doesn't look like the real thing," said the intrepid Kathryn Adie.

"It isn't."

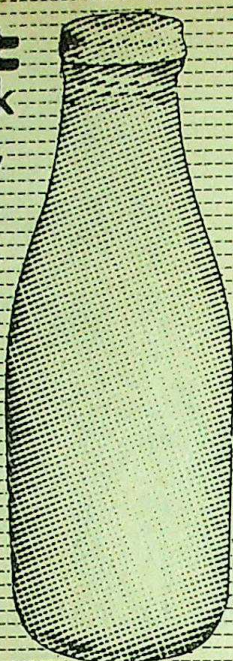
"Good," she replied reassured.

"Back home we're used to much the same. When the Queen passes, they always say, but we were planning to paint the railway station anyway."

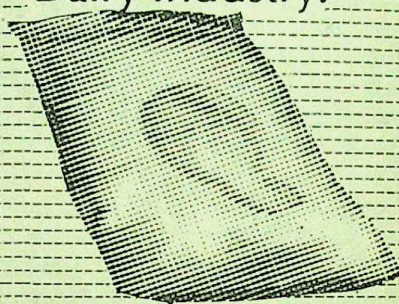
And so the Queen's visit passed, another sequel in the continuing soap opera of Mrs Gandhi's raj: first Asiad, then the Non-aligned Meet and finally CHOGM. No one was fooled, but no one honestly expected to be. After all, no one can ask for more when two Queens meet.

—SUNIL SETHI

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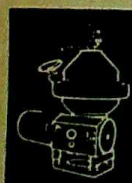
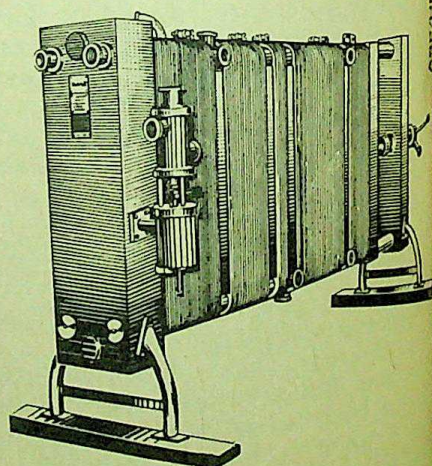
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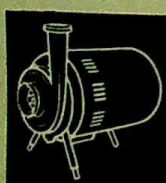
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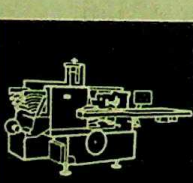
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CHOGM

A Clubby Conclave

VIEWED in isolation, they represent as diverse a gathering of world leaders as it would be possible to find outside the United Nations. The rich and the poor, the radical and the conservative, the oppressed and the oppressors. Yet, last fortnight, when the Commonwealth heads of government gathered in the elegantly-appointed confines of New Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan, they did so as members of a closely-knit club that has survived longer than any other grouping in history. The intimate rapport that binds the 48 Commonwealth member countries together regardless of their differences and diversity, was immediately apparent at the glittering inaugural ceremony chaired by Mrs Gandhi. Not even the sombre subjects the speakers like Britain's Margaret Thatcher, Canada's Pierre Trudeau, Commonwealth Secretary-General "Sonny" Ramphal and Spyros Kyprianou of Cyprus—in absentia—chose to discourse on, could take away from the fact that Commonwealth gatherings are

unique in atmosphere and intimacy.

The solemnity, however, was hardly unexpected. Two Commonwealth member states—Grenada and Cyprus—have experienced violent upheavals in the recent past and it was obvious that much of the week-long deliberations would focus on what role the Commonwealth could or would play in the crises. The initial call for a Commonwealth peacekeeping force died stillborn before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) started. But Grenada and Cyprus could yet prove the tricky issue with the presence of countries like Barbados, St Lucia, Dominica, St Christopher & Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, the six countries that supposedly invited the US to intervene in Grenada.

Mellowed Approach: Significantly, Mrs Thatcher seems to have considerably softened her initial opposition to the US invasion of Grenada. She made no mention of Grenada or Cyprus in her speech which focussed instead on largely economic

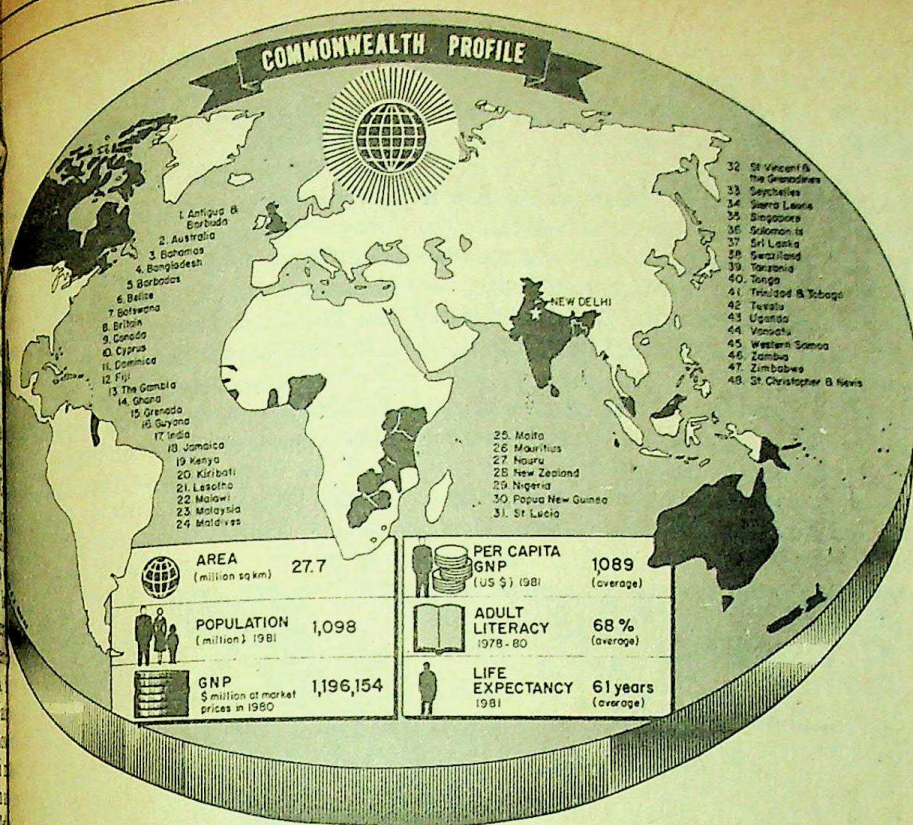
issues and lost no opportunity in the Third World to task for not pulling their financial socks.

But if Thatcher was running form it was obvious that the key to success or otherwise of the meeting lay in As New Zealand's Robert Muldoon quipped snidely at the reception following the inaugural session: "There are manacles in the way of a new Bretton Woods conference to overhaul existing international financial systems, and the biggest obstacle is Mrs Thatcher."

It was perhaps ironical that the person who would surely play a crucial role in the deliberations would be Mrs Gandhi, the only other woman on the dais in the initial line-up. This has undoubtedly been the year of Gandhi, Attenborough and the Indian prime minister. Her international profile has sharpened considerably the past year starting with the conference of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) diplomatic initiatives at the United Nations in New York and now as gracious host of CHOGM. In her speech Mrs Gandhi made clear that CHOGM presented her with a opportunity to continue where she left off in New York last September in her



Commonwealth heads of government at the inaugural ceremony: "helping the world to negotiate"



returned a convert. He too could play a crucial role in the eventual outcome.

But the star attraction was undoubtedly Mrs Gandhi whose bright mustard sari made her stand out like a beacon among her more conservatively attired Commonwealth colleagues. Still showing no signs of the wear and tear of the last few hectic months, she fielded questions with her usual disarming charm, flooring a group of French-speaking Canadian journalists by replying to their questions in fluent French. When Mrs Gandhi is good she is very, very good and she displayed this in no uncertain terms.

Avoiding Issues: On the inevitable questions about Assam and Punjab, Mrs Gandhi adopted her stern schoolmistress look and shrugged them off with the observation that "India is a huge and diverse country. Such explosions are part of a natural process and they die a natural death". Nearby, Sri Lanka's Jayewardene fobbed off questions about the Tamil issue, while Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, the oldest surviving head of state and looking more sprightly than his photographs or age indicated, announced that he had come because Mrs Gandhi had specially asked him to attend. The few questions about the Commonwealth meeting itself were treated by most leaders with the stock reply that it was early times yet. But even so, there was no mistaking the determination on the faces of the assembled heads of state to draw something of lasting value out from the well that they would all be drinking from in New Delhi.

Like the settlement of the Rhodesian problem that arose out of a barbecue dinner given by the then Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser at the Lusaka summit in 1979, there are signs that the current conclave will make a strenuous effort to hasten the independence of the last remaining bastion of colonialism—Namibia. Clearly, the priority would be given over to the economic crisis but issues like Grenada, Namibia and Cyprus, if tackled firmly and collectively, could prove to the world that the Commonwealth is not just another talking shop but a powerful diplomatic weapon. That is the biggest challenge the 48 Commonwealth leaders face at New Delhi. Summits are the only visible tips of the Commonwealth iceberg and the final declaration, only an announcement of intentions.

It is the post-CHOGM follow-up that will eventually matter. It was India, under Nehru which perhaps ensured the continuing survival of the Commonwealth, by opting to stay on in the group after Independence, thus paving the way for the others who now comprise the majority. It would be fitting if India proves to be another major turning point for the Commonwealth and its future.

—DILIP BOBB

for a more equitable economic order. **Finding Solutions:** In fact, many economic measures recommended by NAM's final document find prominent place in the economic proposals put forward by the Commonwealth Secretariat in its paper, "Towards a New Bretton Woods", circulated to all Commonwealth heads of government before the conference. The paper, in the words of Ramphal, strikes a "middle ground" between the demands of the have-nots and the privileged attitude of the haves, and it is this that Mrs Thatcher, the only leader pre-empted who has the ear of President Reagan, is under considerable pressure from the members to convince the developed nations to chart a more generous economic

accompany or advise the leaders who reflect an accurate cross-section of the world and its diversity with the exception of the Arab and eastern bloc. The Commonwealth is easily the longest-surviving group in history (modern summits date back to 1944) and every one of its members is also a member of at least one regional alliance and consequently reflects a wide range of international opinion and attitudes. It is also a grouping that carries a decidedly anti-communist edge and perhaps its biggest advantage is the common language that all members converse in, which does away with the need for time-wasting translations. Unlike NAM, the Commonwealth also has no hard-headed antagonists who tend to unnecessarily cloud issues like Iran and Iraq or even India and Pakistan. As Ramphal says: "The Commonwealth cannot negotiate for the world, but it can help the world to negotiate."

In that context, the relaxed club-like atmosphere that characterises Commonwealth gatherings holds out the promise of something concrete emerging at New Delhi. At Ramphal's reception, barely an hour after the inaugural, the bonhomie and camaraderie was already in evidence. Australia's Bob Hawke and New Zealand's Muldoon were cautiously optimistic about the possible success of the meet but it was the African heads of state who traded jokes with the select members of the press at the reception and exuded the most confidence. Trudeau, a pale shadow of his former flamboyant self, still retained enough charisma to attract the female reporters. As he has admitted before, he came to the Commonwealth a sceptic but

CURRENT EVENTS

PUNJAB

A State of Fear

A LOT more than plain murder was on the minds of the nine armed marauders in the Punjab Roadways bus on that chilly evening last fortnight. It seems the slaying of four Hindu passengers was only incidental to the key objective of shaking a confused administration even further and to shatter a police force already demoralised by persistent failure. And by the look of things in the next few days, they had succeeded.

The timing and execution were significant. The killings took place not far from the village in Kapurthala district which had witnessed the earlier bus murders on October 6. And the bus was abandoned at Chitiwind village on the outskirts of Amritsar, exactly where the one hijacked in October had been found. An Amritsar police officer commented: "If the objective was to rub it in, they have succeeded. The common man has no faith in the capabilities of the police any more." The reaction is typical. The beleaguered police force seem to have lost faith even in their own abilities.

Most policemen have discarded the usual name-plates on the shirt-front for fear of reprisals for any action against extremists. District superintendents of police no longer park their cars in the office compounds. Wherever possible these are now driven right inside the corridors so that the officer can get into it without exposing himself. Increasingly, senior police officers admit, they are finding it difficult to find investigating officers prepared to interrogate suspects connected with extremism. Says Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Pritam Singh Bhindar: "The criminal today is far ahead of the police. Yet things will improve. We are trying to modernise, re-equip and reorient the police force."

Widespread Insecurity: But he will find few takers for his optimism in the state today. Such is the erosion of popular confidence in the law and order machinery that many Hindus are coming round to the view that they must arm themselves. As the senior superintendent of Amritsar police admitted, there has been a steep increase in the number of non-Sikhs asking for arms licences.

There are progressively fewer passengers in night buses and the state's highways that were earlier full of traffic at all hours now have only trucks and government buses at night. There are hardly any private cars. Admitted Bhindar: "We are trying to take precautions but it is impossible to guard

all buses. There are 800 buses leaving Amritsar alone daily—82 of them at night." The police were meanwhile conducting exercises to run most of the night buses in convoys as has been the practice in the dacoit-infested regions of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and in the North-east.

The November 18 killings proved even more of a set-back to the Government's credibility because the extremists pulled it off in a region widely known to be extremist-infested and guarded by the police throughout the day. At night, on paper, there are police



Victims of the November 18 bus murders: pawns in a ruthless game of pressure

pickets and road-blocks at all important crossings on the roads in the region. Yet on that evening, as the extremists hijacked the bus, killed people and returned to Amritsar, they were not questioned at a single road-block.

Senior government officers point out that if the bus had been stopped even once at a road-block, it would have been very difficult for the killers to get away. Police officers admit that it was sheer lack of professionalism on the part of the Amritsar police. However, Governor Bhairab Dutt Pande has different ideas. Said he: "Police picketing is an exercise of doubtful utility. There have, on the other hand, been complaints that it leads to unnecessary harassment to innocent travellers." He, however admitted that the state's police were not equipped to deal with extremists.

Angry Reaction: Honest admissions
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apart, the administration was able to ease a stricken population which was exactly reassured by the Government's announcement that in future victims' killings would be awarded cash compensation "as a matter of policy". Said Bhan Bhatia, a textile showroom owner in Ludhiana: "The implication is that the Government is totally resigned to the possibility of further killings and wants to take responsibilities for a little bit of cash."

Going a step further, Pandit Chand, president of the Brahmin Sabha in Amritsar and a militant Hindu leader, said: "What is the difference between us and the Sikhs? It is just that they are armed and we aren't. Time has come now for us to keep arms, even without licences."

ment for that offence is picnic compared to dying helplessly at the hands of the extremists." Indeed, a major objective of the extremists has been achieved in the growing distrust between the Hindus and the Sikhs. According to one theory, the extremists are planning to engineer widespread communal riots as only that could help fuel separatist tendencies.

If this is so, they could not have chosen a better time for striking—on the eve of the 508th birth anniversary of Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism. On this occasion, Sikhs take out large processions. Also significantly, the killings came a few days before the Commonwealth Games of Government Meeting in New Delhi. The news of the killings broke out in the city when Mrs Gandhi was receiving congratulatory messages on her 66th birthday.

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Hindus."

TERRORISM

Bloody Replay

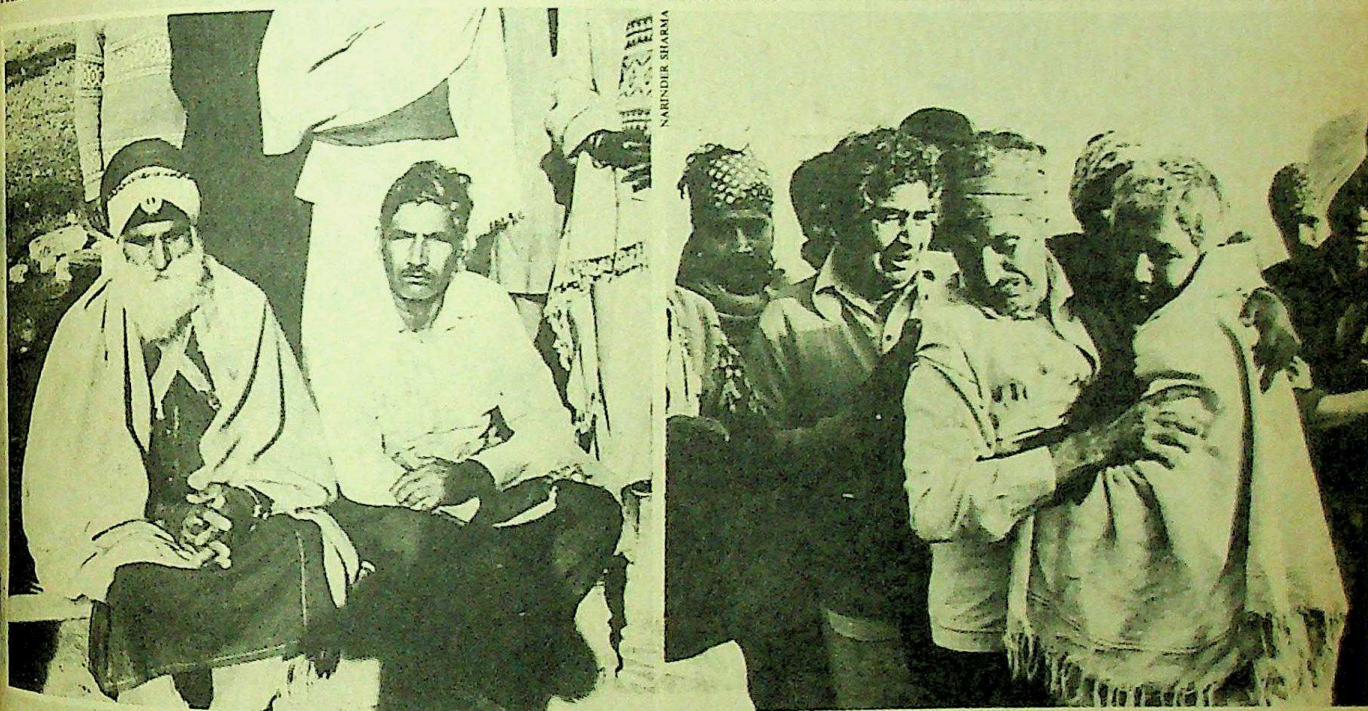
HISTORY repeated itself sickeningly on the dusty roads of Punjab. On November 18, as the Amritsar-Moga Punjab Roadways bus PJA 3015 left Taran Taran, the 30-odd passengers began to doze off. But all thoughts of sleep vanished when at the stroke of 10 p.m. the nine masked men brandishing sten-guns and pistols rose from their seats and moved to cover the exits. One of them took over the steering and another shouted out in a harsh voice: "Sit quietly. We only want to deal with the Hindus."

at length. He says emotionally: "They kicked them and hit them with their gun barrels. It was so cruel. One fell at their feet and said he was a *mochi* (cobbler) and not a Hindu. Another said he was a goldsmith. They too were kicked and beaten but somehow the killers accepted what they said and spared them."

In fact, Baba Ajit Singh's courage is about the only ray of hope in the whole gruesome incident. When the killers reached for Harbans Lal, a Hindu sitting next to Ajit Singh, the Nihang stopped them. Says Harbans Lal: "He is like God to me. He told the killers I was his son and had got my hair cut some time back. Even when the killers insisted on taking me away and threatened to kill him (Ajit

much of the episode. He asks plaintively: "With a gun held against your temple how conscious can you be of what is happening?" Both of them have been suspended till an inquiry is held into the incident.

Insolent Confidence: In many ways the incident was almost a repeat of the Bhullar killings but there were some vital differences. This time the assassins showed insolent confidence allowing the passengers to within a few hundred yards of the dead bodies. They also talked freely with the passengers, asking them to have a look at their "Pakistan-made" gun. Says Manjit Kaur, the daughter of Ajit Singh: "They often said they had been trained by the Pakistani army and invited



A lucky survivor: Harbans Lal with Baba Ajit Singh and (right) being received by his brother after the ordeal

Singh) he did not let go of me. But for him I would have been dead."

The killers satisfied themselves by hitting him over the head with a sten-gun butt for the sin of cutting his hair. Soon afterwards, the passengers recall, they saw four Hindus being led out of the bus, one by one and shot in the face and head by the side of the road.

The conductor of the bus Joginder Singh also came in for some rough treatment. One of the hijackers smelt a whiff of alcohol on his breath and angrily asked him if he had had any liquor. Before Joginder Singh could reply the hijacker began beating him. Recalls Joginder Singh: "Then one of them shouted that no Sikh should be harmed and I was spared." His colleague, driver Saudagar Singh, is still too shaken to remember

the other Sikhs to go along with them for training." Intelligence agencies, however, feel that this was the hijackers' way of "adding insult to injury", and also a ploy to mislead the police in their investigations.

The whole gruesome episode lasted less than an hour. After shooting four men, the hijackers ordered the other passengers out of the bus. Then they drove the bus away to Chitiwind village on the outskirts of Amritsar, left it there and disappeared, probably by foot. The next morning police dogs led the police to a rail-road crossing less than a kilometre away before losing the scent. And while the police fell back on the expedient of finding scapegoats it was clear that the extremists had vanished into thin air once again.

CURRENT EVENTS

the Government had anticipated tensions on the festival and, according to Bhindar, the reason why there were not enough policemen manning pickets and road-blocks on the evening of the killings was that most of them had been withdrawn for law and order duties with the processions in Tarn Taran and Amritsar the following day.

Accommodating Moves: But if tensions were averted finally, it was thanks to a belated show of far-sightedness by both the Akali moderates and Hindu leaders in Amritsar. While he was quick in his condemnation of the killings, Akali morcha dictator Harchand Singh Longowal did not yield to police requests to change the route of the procession, which was to pass through crowded and predominantly Hindu markets. The local, influential BJP leaders, on the other hand, were insistent on calling an immediate bandh in the town.

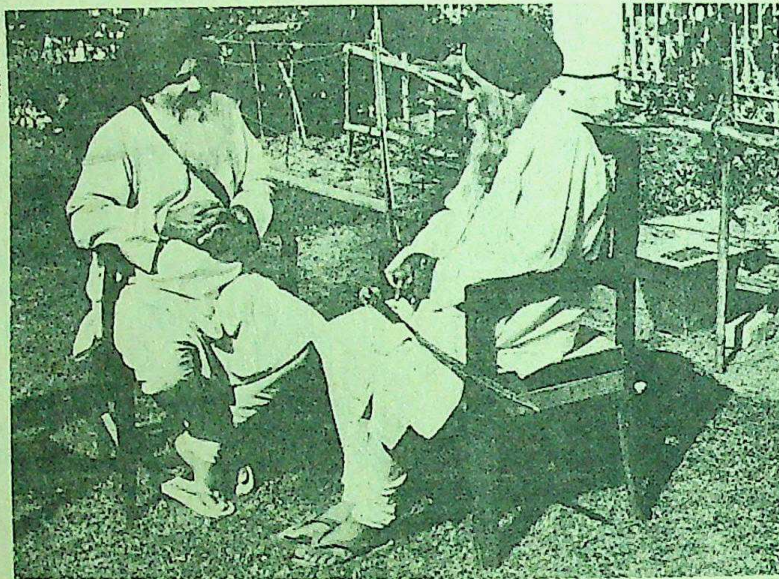
But as a harried administration counted its beads, the BJP settled for just a public meeting in protest against the killings, while Longowal gave the Sikh processionists firm instructions not to do anything provocative like brandishing unsheathed swords. And while his refusal to curtail Gurupurab festivities in protest against the killings irked Hindu leaders, he made amends later by backing the latter's call for a bandh in the state the following Monday and in adjoining Haryana and Himachal Pradesh on Tuesday. Said Longowal: "We are as grieved as all our Punjabi brothers and I have asked the Sikhs to participate in the bandh to prevent further tensions."

But while Longowal's strong condemnation of the killings "as an anti-national and anti-Sikh act" was only to be expected, even the fire-eating Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, sitting atop the adjoining Guru Nanak Niwas, came up with a statement disowning the killings. He told INDIA TODAY in language typical of him: "My people have nothing to do with this. Ask the Rani of Hindustan who could have stood to benefit from such killings. They blame me even if a *reori* (a jaggery preparation) falls from a handcart." But he asked in the same vein: "Fine, I have said this. But tell me, has any Hindu ever condemned the killing of the Sikhs in Punjab. If you kill in ordinary clothes, you are a criminal. If you kill wearing police uniforms you are a saint."

Bhindranwale goes on to suggest that the Government itself is behind the killings, saying: "Mrs Gandhi is the prime minister and she says she knows who has been killing

people. If so, why doesn't she stop them. And if she doesn't, it is obvious that she is herself getting this done to get the Hindu votes. See, the killings took place 50 km away and they left the bus at Chitiwind to defame the Sikhs inside the Durbar Sahib (the Golden Temple)."

Injunction Refused: But even as the Government was still making up its mind on which organisation was behind the killings, the Bhindranwale camp was a little shaken by the impact of the new developments. Particularly as, initially, the Akali moderates and Jathedar Kirpal Singh, head priest of the Akal Takht, the supreme religious and temporal body of the Sikhs, seemed inclined to accept Governor Pande's request for some kind of intervention to prevent killings.



Longowal with Jathedar Kirpal Singh: a moderate approach

Following suggestions from various political leaders at an all-party conference in Amritsar, Pande had requested the Akal Takht to issue a *hukamnama* (religious order) condemning the killings. Jathedar Kirpal Singh and Longowal immediately went into a huddle but were pre-empted by Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the all-powerful president of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, who firmly ruled out a *hukamnama* while speaking to a congregation at Gurudwara Kalgidhar Sahib at Ludhiana as "it would amount to pronouncing only the Sikhs guilty of the killings".

Said Jathedar Kirpal Singh, convalescing after a severe heart attack, to INDIA TODAY: "I am seeking the opinion of the Sikh masses and leaders. But a *hukamnama* may not be practicable because it will be binding only on the Sikhs. An appeal to all communities for peace, and condemning the killings will be better."

The Government's appeal also upset the pro-Bhindranwale elements. Said his key lieutenant and General Secretary of the All

India Sikh Students Federation (ASSF) member Singh Sandhu: "If the Akal Takht issues a *hukamnama*, will it be binding on the Government and the police also? It is an offence to the Governor arrogantly speaking from a position of authority and demanding the Akal Takht to do something." Sandhu said he was possibly perturbed Bhindranwale: "This is not the right time for me to talk on this (request for *hukamnama*). But I will give you punches when time comes."

Shortly after the powwow, Longowal and Jathedar Kirpal Singh, Bhindranwale called on the latter and by the evening of the Gurupurab, there was no word that the Akal Takht would issue another *hukamnama*. Said Pande later: "I had exactly asked for a *hukamnama*. At the

party meeting, most participants had asked for a condemnation of the killings by the Akal Takht and that is what I had asked for."

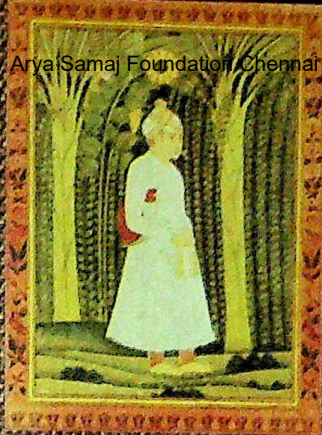
WHILE Pande's surprise introduction of the *hukamnama* continued to be a major point in Punjab, there was an intense discussion on the central Government's firm assertions that Pakistan was backing extremism in Punjab. Gandhi, her son Rajiv Gandhi, the Union Home Ministry functionaries maintained that there was no evidence of Pakistani involvement in Punjab and that Gandhi reacted sharply to a landhar report quoting

as saying that the Government had no evidence.

Pande, who later complained of having been misquoted, told INDIA TODAY: "I said we did not have firm evidence in the sense of its being sufficient to convict a body. But what I said meant that we had circumstantial evidence which could be made public due to the sensitive nature of such issues." But in Punjab, even government functionaries were sceptical about talk of Pakistani involvement. None of the security and intelligence agencies have come up with any firm evidence of such involvement. But the following are the bits of circumstantial evidence that the Government claims to have:

► Capture of weapons and grenades with Pakistani markings. These include the gun that the assassins left outside the house of the late Jathedar Kirpal Singh, the late Jathedar Kirpal Singh in Amritsar, a deputy superintendent of police in the Punjab Police Force's hit list, after killing his son, a customer and wounding his son.

► The confession of Ajit Singh, a member



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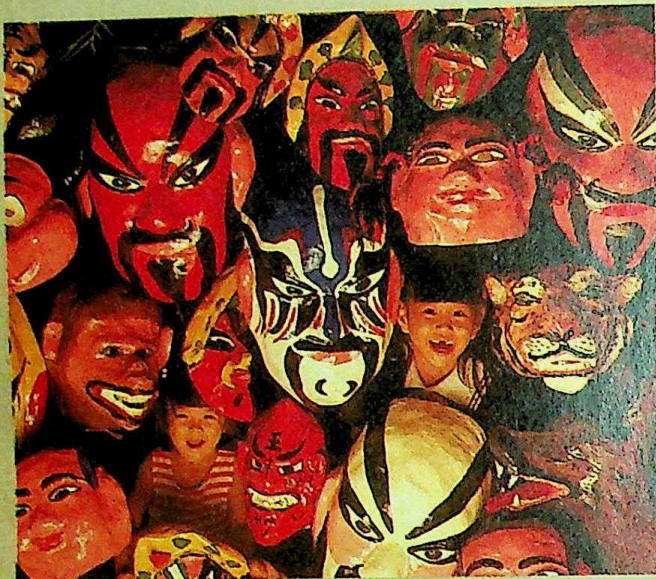
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Interception of stray radio signals by certain Pakistani units inquiring about the "performance of our units" in

And it would be puerile to expect Pakistani officers to talk routinely over the wireless about the performance of their units in India". These messages may well be a practical joke by Pakistani officers, having fun at the expense of their Indian counterparts. But the Centre's insistence on exchange has proved counter-productive in as much as it has provided an alibi to the supporters of Bhindranwale and even avowedly extremist organisations like the Dal Khalsa and Babbar Akali Dal who also now point their fingers westwards. Quipped Bhindranwale: "Maybe it's the Pakistanis."

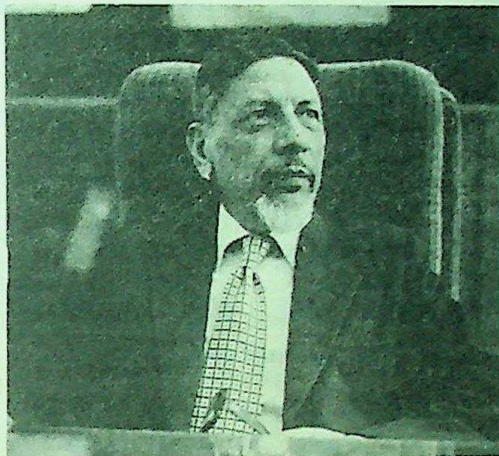
and ask her whom she calls Pakistani people across the border, or does she say the Sikhs have now become Pakistanis? Yet there are many in Punjab who do not believe that the Sikhs as a community are behind the killings and there are numerous elements mixed up in the free-acts of butchery. Said *The Tribune* in an editorial:

...community as a community, nor by the Akali Dal or (as it seems now) by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale who has incited the killings, as has Sant Harbh Singh Longowal. These are crimes committed by people who have a code of their own, which is independent of a recognised articulated ideology."

...Singh Bagi, a panch of
...Dal Khalsa: "We have no
...the Hindus. The killings are
...our enemies." Longowal was
...guarded; "The fact that killers defied
...police obstacles and got away aroun
...suspicions as to the Government's
..."

reactions: The Centre's further
of the Jammu & Kashmir Go-

However, the choice of Poonch as a venue was interesting as the extremists of the Babbar Akali Dal are believed to have been using the line of control between Poonch and Pak-occupied Kashmir for clandestinely leaving and entering India. But a police official said: "There is no evidence at all of the complicity of the J&K Government unless you think that the existence of a picture of Bhindranwale in Farooq Abdullah's office is a



Pande: no breakthrough yet

pointer in that direction."

Some police officers also feel that while communal killings and attacks on policemen and Nirankaris are acts of extremists, a large number of ordinary criminals and anti-social elements are also taking advantage of the confusion and indulging in crimes, particularly bank robberies. Said Amritsar police chief Ajay Pal Singh Maan: "The problem is compounded by the fact that the banks themselves are not security conscious. Of the 217 branches in Amritsar district alone, nearly 30 do not have armed guards. Often armed guards have decrepit, partridge-shooting guns and are used as orderlies carrying out odd errands for their officers".

Government spokesmen say the bank managements have been warned to be more careful at a meeting of their senior executives called by the Home Ministry in Delhi. Says Maan: "I agree that there aren't many hardcore extremists among people arrested by us. But the arrest of petty criminals at least prevents them from fishing in troubled waters."

Political Moves: Even as the recrudescence of communal killings dominated the

Talwandi's supporters questioned the propriety of Longowal calling the meeting without consulting their jailed leader, but Longowal countered it claiming that he had called only the 475 members loyal to his party and "elected by the 22 lakh members of the Akali Dal"—implying that Talwandi commanded the support of only the remaining 21. The exercise seems to be part of the moderates' strategy to counter the growing influence of the extremists by seeking a renewed mandate from the representatives.

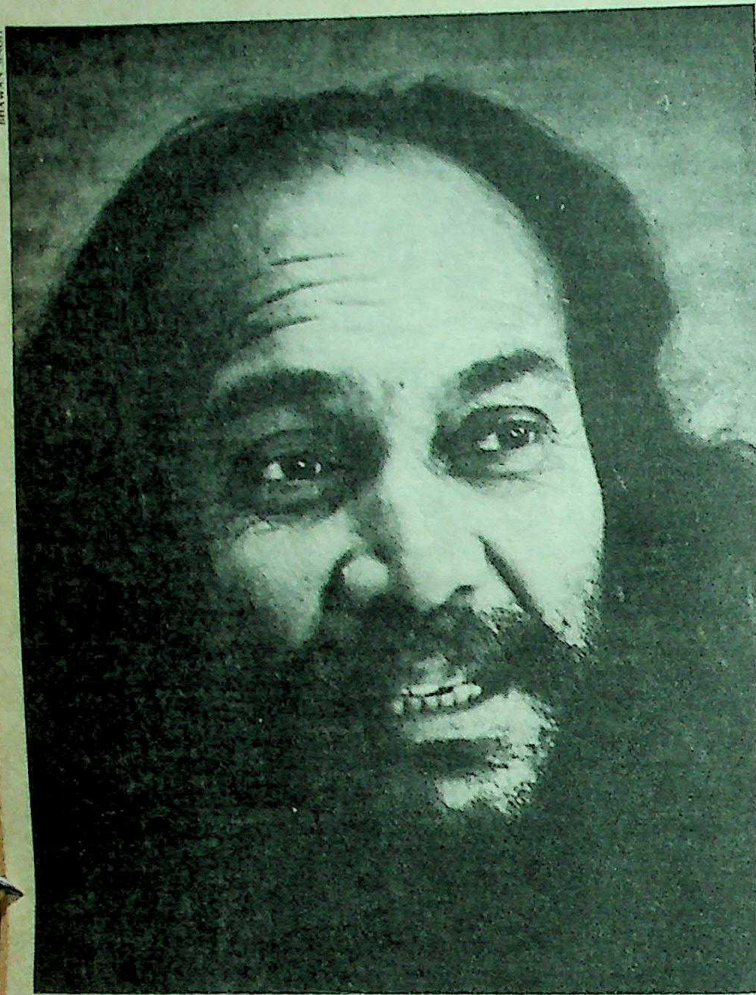
Another development of vital importance was the Supreme Court's decision to take over the case filed by some Punjab farmers in the high court at Chandigarh seeking quashing of the prime minister's 1981 award on the Ravi-Beas waters in the light of the Akali charge that Chief Justice S.S. Sandhwalia had been transferred from Chandigarh to Patna to secure a verdict favouring the Government.

Said Longowal: "Supreme Court's action is a positive step. But we now have suspicion that the Government is even trying to influence the courts." Bhindranwale, however, was not impressed and said: "Is Supreme Court not a unit of the Government? They have done nothing solid." The Akali Dal General House meeting will review this step as well.

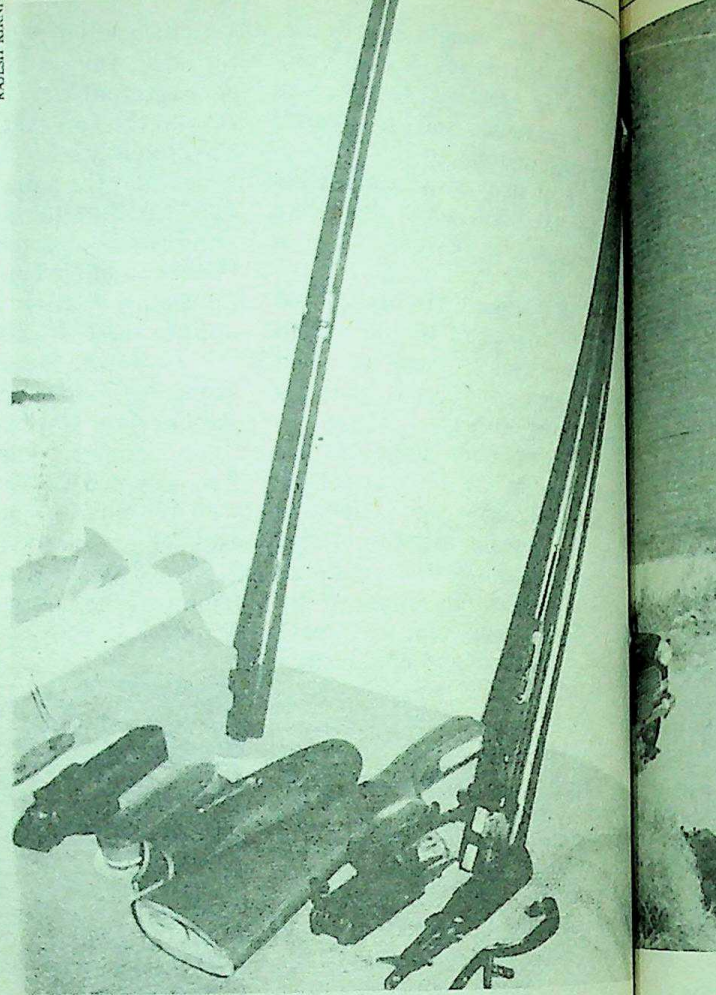
Hopeful Scenario: In fact, legal experts in Chandigarh feel that the Supreme Court's action amounts to an indirect acceptance of the Akali demand that the river waters issue should be decided by the highest judicial authority. That leaves the issue of transfer of Chandigarh and reallocation of certain territories on the basis of language as the only major hurdles in the way of rapprochement with the moderate Akali leadership.

The key question now is whether the moderates, who are still in control of at least their party machinery, will gather the courage to come out openly in opposition to extremism. For them, perpetuation of the present drift would mean ultimate surrender to the hotheads. At the same time, much will also depend on the attitude of the Centre which has spinelessly handled the situation from the angles of law and order and negotiations with the moderates. Further indecision at this stage will only lengthen the night of the long knives.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Amritsar



PAIESH KIRANI



DHIRENDRA BRAHMACHARI

Gunning for the Swami

It was before a packed court-room that the Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir, V. Khalid, read out his order, granting interim anticipatory bail to Brahmachari but asking him to furnish a surety of Rs 2 lakh, two

Wide Notice: The case was naturally lapped up by the media. The extent of the alleged crime was overshadowed by the weight of the personality in question—the dhoti-clad swami hovering for nearly a decade now in the twilight zone between politics and business. Fuelling the fire of curiosity was the rumour of Brahmachari having lately fallen out of favour with 1 Safdarjung Road, a rumour made potent by the abrupt discontinuation of his television programmes, Yogabhyas, early this year.

h, two For Farooq, it was a clever plan to catch CC-0. In Public Domain. Gurukul Kangri Collection, Haridwar

Obvious Overtones: Though the overtone is obvious, the political overtone is serious, the political overtone episode could not have been more obvious. On November 19, a bare 12 hours after the search had been made at the premises of Shiva Gun Factory, Farooq himself accompanied the police team that seized the barrels and rounded up the three men. On the same day, the chief minister was in New Delhi discussing with opposition leaders the Brahmachari affair. On November 20, non-Congress(I) members staged a walkout from the Lok Sabha demanding a statement from the Union Government. Farooq was seated in the VIP enclosure, observing the discomfiture of the treasury benches. During his stay in the capital, Farooq received blackmail and threats from the Blackbans. The Blackbans' legal defence was a jumble of gibberish motivated by the pressure on Farooq to remove him to the State. Still no action was taken. Farooq was returning from Congress(I) today, after a long absence. Some ministers are applying for the application of the Brahmachari's case.

During his stay in the



Police at the Shiva Gun Factory: sudden crackdown

ed on Brahmachari in his Vishwayatan
gthram on Ashok Road, ostensibly to
form him of the charges being brought
at him". It hardly assuaged Brahma-
chari's feelings, greatly roused by such
business incursions by the state into
his affairs. At a press conference
immediately after the *tete-a-tete* with
the swami quoted a Sanskrit
saying, "like a king who is
favouring you now and punishing
you when it does not suit him". He main-
tained that he had done everything in accor-
dance with law, and the case was a plain
blackmail and a political stunt".
The blackmail theory was Brahma-
chari's legal defence, to which O.P. Sharma,
a slick-jawed, assertive lawyer add-
ed the gib motif that Farooq, by apply-
ing pressure on Brahmachari, had in fact
acted as intermediary and
agent. Still no statement in his defence was
coming from any recognised leader of
the Congress(I), thus confirming the view
expressed by the minister's house had plummeted.
The application for anticipatory bail,
which Brahmachari's counsel noted: "...in a most

irresponsible manner a false case has been
concocted against the petitioner (Brahma-
chari) which stands registered under
the FIR No 364 of 1983 in the Police Sta-
tion, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu. The copy of
this FIR would show that it starts with vague
allegations to the effect that on 18th
November, 1983 there was a report at 4:30
p.m. that a sufficient quantity of barrels and
guns with identification marks of a foreign
country and an equal number of spares had
been stored in Shed No. 6 of the factory and
as such *ex-facie* offence U/S 3/25 of the
Indian Arms Act seems to have been
committed."

The petition added: "There are public
documents duly executed by the government
authorities which are evidence to the fact
that the firm M/s Shiva Gun Factory have
been carrying on the manufacturing business
with a clear conscience and without any
criminal intention. There is no violation of
any law, licence or notification, neither the
same is indicated in the five days' investi-
gation by the police."

IN JAMMU Brahmachari owns
three huge estates, including the fortress-
like Aparna Ashram at Mantlai on the
southern slope of the Shivaliks in Udhampur

district and the gun factory, which went
onstream in 1980 within months of Mrs
Gandhi's return to power, has since been look-
ed upon with awe and curiosity. The com-
bination of yoga and the firearms is of course
a teasing puzzle. But still more confounding
is the steep rise in its fortunes. After just three
years in business, Shiva Gun Factory is
already the second largest among the state's
25 gun makers, and the largest of the 23
huddled in one block of sheds at
Gandhinagar industrial estate. It is licensed
to make 3,000 single and double-barrel guns
in a year, but most of the neighbouring
factories, though in existence for decades,
could not get licence limits enhanced beyond
600-800.

However, Brahmachari was licensed by
the Union Home Ministry—when Giani
Zail Singh was the home minister—to ma-
nufacture the guns under Form Nine of the
Indian Arms Act. There are two other kinds
of licence possible in the small arms trade,
under Forms Eleven and Twelve, by which
the licencees can repair and "keep and sell"
the guns respectively. A Form Nine licence-
holder can of course sell the guns he has
made, but has no right to trade in guns of a
different make, or those which have just been
assembled by him through a factory process

not covered by the scope of the word 'manufacture'.

Simple Operation: In 1981 and 1982, when Brahmachari's factory made and sold 3,000 guns worth an estimated Rs 37.5 lakh each year the process he employed was similar to the general practice in the small arms trade: rolling mild steel into a barrel shape, threading and boring holes through it, machining the body and the trigger, sawing the butt into shape, varnishing it, and putting the components together. The product was a fully indigenous Indian gun. Says Charan Pal Singh, secretary-general of the All India Arms Dealers' Association: "To my knowledge, no Indian gun-maker uses foreign parts or components. The fact that Swami Dharendra Brahmachari was using or, as the police say, assembling imported components is a revelation to me."

With a single-barrel gun made in Brahmachari's factory priced at around Rs 800 (double-barrel: Rs 1,700), it was considered cheap by Indian standards. Guns made at Monghyr district in Bihar, the Mecca of the Indian small arms industry, now sell at Rs 1,500 and upwards for single-barrel, depending on finishing and workmanship. Brahmachari sold his guns through registered dealers, and even the police in Jammu affirmed they had no evidence of the guns finding their way into the hands of Sikh extremists.

Foreign Connection: However, in a move bearing the hall-mark of Brahmachari's business genius, he entered into an agreement early this year with Carrero Y. Astellara, the Spanish makers of guns and other firearms, for what he described as "components of guns" but what a police official in Jammu described as "complete guns in a knocked-down condition". S. Balbir Singh, chairman of the Jammu & Kashmir Small-scale Gun Manufacturers' Association, who owns the nearby Friends Gun Factory, trotted out the relevant figures. According to Singh, an imported Spanish single-barrel gun would sell in India for a price varying between Rs 3,000 and Rs 3,500 depending on quality. Since the barrel and the body, as seen after the seizure, distinctly carry the 'Made in Spain' markings, Brahmachari's guns could be sold as authentic Spanish guns. The cost of components, with duty and freight paid—as Singh estimated it—would be about Rs 600 per single-barrel gun, whereas that of a double-barrel gun would be Rs 2,500. With a Spanish double-barrel gun costing Rs 15,000 in India, Brahmachari could easily earn a profit. The disputed consignment would have fetched him Rs 14.5 lakhs, by trading in the 500 foreign guns bought lock, stock and barrel.

However, when Shiva Gun Factory was allotted importers' code number B 8211595

on February 21 this year, it was on an application that it would import parts of arms including gun barrels and blanks; components of 12-bore shot-guns; metal joining machinery and tools; and explosive items. Brahmachari's plea is that, being an actual user (that is, a licensed industrial undertaking), he is free to import the necessary components under open general licence (OGL).

Differences: The basic difference between an Indian gun and a European gun is in the metal. Whereas the barrel of an Indian gun is made of mild steel, prone to bursting whenever there is an obstruction in the path of the bullet, the European gunsmiths use

to prove his bona fides as a legal user. However, the prosecution while challenging Brahmachari's plea for anticipatory bail, said:

► what Brahmachari was claiming that components of guns were really in broken-down condition;

► he is licensed to store fire-arms components in Shed No. 9, but he has them in Shed No. 6 which, though he claims to be Shiva Gun Factory, is not mentioned in the 1983 licence;

► he brought the "guns" to Jammu from Kashmir without securing a 'no objection certificate' from either the home department of the state or the commissioner of



Shed No. 9 of the Shiva Gun Factory: thriving business

alloy steel of a higher grade, more ductile and malleable, which would 'bulge' rather than burst in the event of a firing jam. Gun-dealers holding licence under Form Twelve of the Indian Arms Act often ask, and get, fancy price for English, Czechoslovak and Spanish sporting guns.

Talking to the press, Brahmachari asserted that he had decided to import foreign components to "improve the quality of the product". He repeated the argument that, as actual user, a term defined in the Union Government's Import-Export policy manual as an industrial undertaking duly licensed to manufacture any goods, he was fully entitled to import the components. He produced the customs documents as well as the importer's code number, allotted to him by the chief controller of imports and exports,

Delhi, the place where the consignment arrived. This, the counsel added, amounted to "clandestine" movement of arms punishable under Section 26 of the Arms Act, the maximum punishment for which was imprisonment for seven years.

THE LEGALITY of the import and use of the components will have to be decided by the court. But the use of Brahmachari's Spanish connections in the case had not leaked out had it not been for the labour force, 101 of whom (out of a total of 150) had been employed on casual basis and had been asked to leave last month because of the Laxman Chaudhary said, "the licence for the year had been fulfilled". As a result, some of the workers told police that their future was uncertain because

a legal...
...would from now on require only a
...work-force for just joining the parts
...Farooq said the police stormed
...the factory only after they were
...about the Spanish guns by the
...
...However, the move against Brahma-
...could not have been purely accidental;
...is perhaps the right word that
...the relationship till recently between
...on one hand and the late
...Abdullah and Farooq Abdullah on
...Even Farooq admitted, though on
...note of injured innocence: "He
...has been kind to me all his
...He knew my father. I did not know that
...take advantage of this and use this
...for virtual gun-running."

Friendly Exchanges: The friendship is
...from the fact that Farooq, on
...chief ministership of Jammu &
...made use of the Swami's six-seater
...aircraft a number of times: between
...October 1982 and April 1983, the aircraft's
...book shows at least eight entries of the
...of minister's name. However, more signi-
...is the fact that the National Con-
...Government had continuously over-
...the manner in which Brahmachari
...the various societies floated by him had
...acquired immovable property in Jammu &
...Kashmir.

Under the Permanent Resident's Certi-
...Act of Jammu & Kashmir, read with
...Transfer of Property Act valid in the
...no transfer of land is possible in favour
...someone who is not a permanent resident
...Jammu & Kashmir unless it is with express
...decision of the state Cabinet. However, at
...Mantlai, altogether 628 kanals and 14 ma-
...roughly 79 acres) of land has been
...to be transferred to Aparna
...Ashram, of which Brahmachari is the direc-
...from 71 small plot-owners. The Jammu
...Kashmir Agrarian Reforms Act, 1978,
...that any such transfer without permis-
...of the revenue minister is void. This act
...recommended in 1981 and the restriction was
...to the extent of transfer up to four

Religious Offerings: However, 37 of the
...transferred to Aparna Ashram
...more than four kanals. As many as
...transfers were effected after 1975, so that
...the plea that the earlier Congress
...Minister Pyare Lal Handoo says
...transfers were executed in the guise of
...offerings, or *sankalp*. He agreed that
...had no legal sanctity. In fact, his
...is currently raking up land re-
...he said on behalf of the
...after 12 years of inaction.

The first transfer at Mantlai was effected in 1971.

The Aparna Ashram at Mantlai is a sort of yogic Xanadu complete with a 15-acre air-strip, control tower, two hangars, a swimming pool, central road as spacious as Delhi's Janpath, orchard, lawns and a building-cum-hostel complex with a close-circuit colour television network, which is fully air-conditioned, marble-floored and designed like a tree with rows of rooms resting on suspended cantilevers. All this was built on land whose tenure was, at best, uncertain.

Said Bhim Singh, MLA from Chenani in Udhampur district: "The Cen-

RAJESH KIRNI



Lawyer Sharma: rebutting the charges

tral Government allowed Brahmachari to build his palace knowing well that the airstrip was only seven miles from a sensitive radar unit and less than 15 miles from the headquarters of the entire Northern Command. The state Government ignored the illegality of the land transfers. Brahmachari certainly knows magic."

IN 1978, when the late Sheikh was the chief minister, the state Government issued a gazetted notification allowing "a transfer of immovable property situated at Katra and the villages contiguous to it in favour of Vishwayatan Yogashram, a society registered under the Societies' Registration Act, 1860". Brahmachari is the director of Vishwayatan Yogashram too. Thus, the transfer of 177 kanals of land to the

Yogashram was legalised at Katra, an important centre along the pilgrim trail to the shrine of Vaishno Devi. The Katra ashram too is now equipped with an air-strip, two-way radio communication equipment and control tower.

The third unit of the swami's yoga establishments in Jammu is currently coming up at Gandhinagar, the upper class residential suburb of Jammu city, only two miles from the airport. In the Gandhinagar area, construction of only two floors, or up to 35 feet, is allowed; but Aparna Ashram is building a six-storey 90-foot structure without permission from the Jammu Municipal Council.

A recommendation to that effect by Ved Bajaj, president of the council, to demolish the building has not been acted upon. The municipal records also say that the land does not belong to Aparna Ashram but to Sohan Singh, a taxi-driver of Jammu, though the signboard of Aparna Ashram is conspicuously displayed at the building.

Deft Manoeuvres: However, none of his other enterprises could grow faster than his arms business. Brahmachari secured the licence to manufacture guns, again, by a series of deft manipulations: firstly, by picking up a mechanic, Dharam Chand, whose own petty repairing licence had lapsed on non-use 30 years ago; then by offering him finances and getting his licence upgraded to initially a licence for making one gun at a time (1977), and then for making 3,000 guns (1980). If the state Government had not abruptly gone and thrown a spanner in the works, the Spanish deal would have given him a clear headstart in the market for superior guns by paying moderate customs duty on imported components.

And his field of activity would invariably have been Jammu & Kashmir, a state which he has frequented since early '50s and where he feels secure. During the Janata period, he shifted to Mantlai and possibly would not have come back to Delhi if Mrs Gandhi had not returned. Says Farooq: "Look at his Delhi Ashram which, with its cheap partition walls, frayed upholstery and ramshackle structure, looks like a transit camp. And look at his places in Jammu, solidly built, massive and secure." Apparently, the swami always kept in mind the contingency of the fluctuating fortunes of his patrons in Delhi, and regarded Jammu & Kashmir as a haven of continuity, where the ruling people would always remain on the right side of Mrs Gandhi and her minions.

The police entered the premises of Shiva Gun Factory shattering the unusual swami's fond dreams.

—SUMIT MITRA in Jammu

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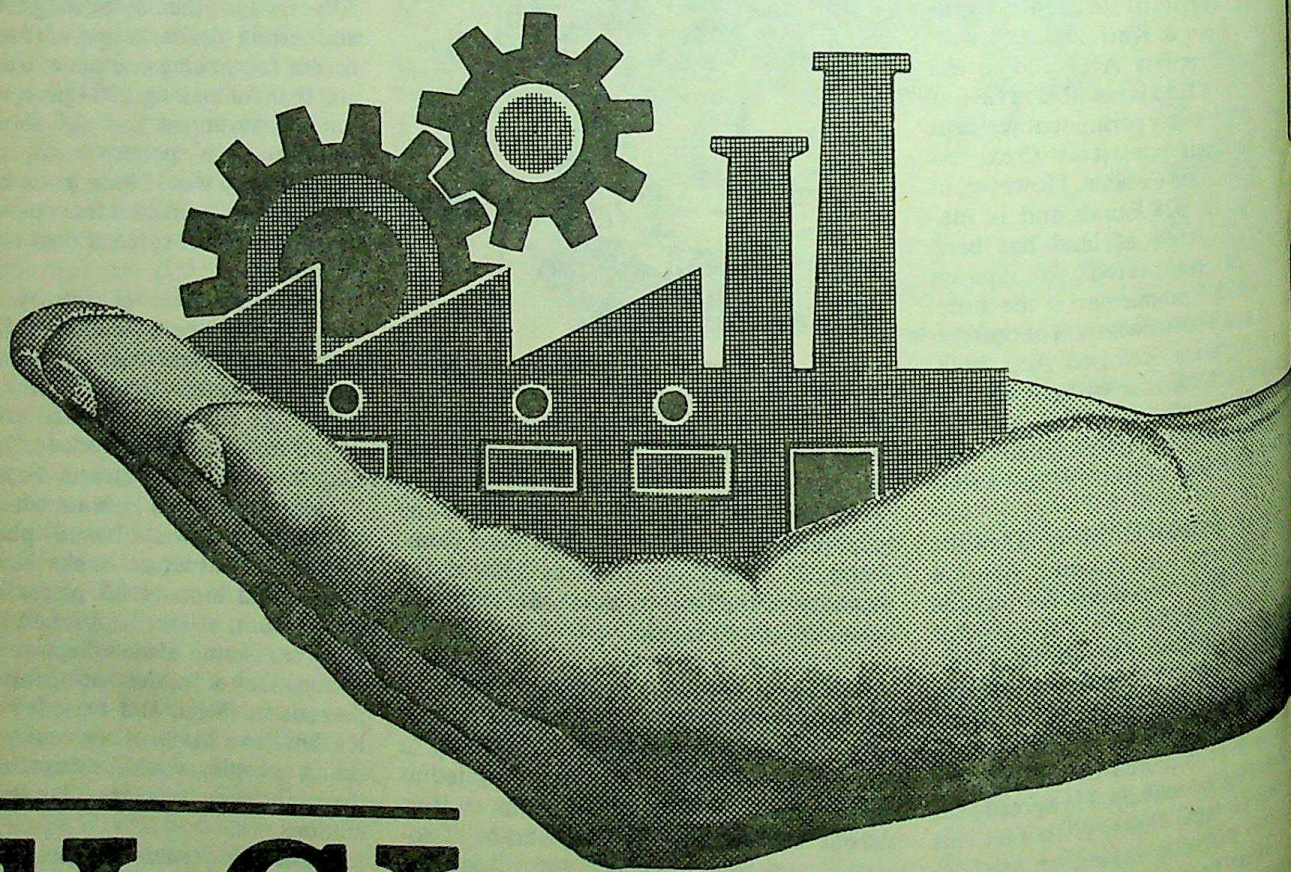
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Regional Roundup

FOR POLITICIANS in the North-east it is the season of get-togethers. Last fortnight saw a conference of Congress(I) leaders and workers of north-eastern states and Union territories, including to be followed a few days later by a conference of regional parties of the same area and at the same venue. While the Congress(I) show was in keeping with similar conferences in other parts of the country, the regional parties' meet was the culmination of determined efforts by the Purbanchaliya Parishad (PLP) of Assam to arrive at a better harmony of action among "like-minded" parties on issues such as the influx of foreigners, the need to preserve the econo-

mic, social and cultural heritage of the North-east and the need for a political personality in the region".

The keynote of the PLP-convened meeting was struck by S.D. Khongwir, representing the Hill State Peoples Democratic Party of Meghalaya when he said: "We in the North-east are a separate entity and it is essential that we have closer understanding among ourselves which will help us meet our common problems." Both Khongwir and Charlie Kevichussa of the Nagaland National Democratic Party insisted that, among other things, the foreigners issue was becoming a problem in their own states too and "we felt this was an opportunity to learn from our Assamese friends exactly what magnitude the problem may assume and the ways in

which we can unitedly resist it".

Spreading Fears: In Meghalaya, Khongwir's party has already gone into action by organising bandhs in protest against the proposal to extend the railway up to Burneyhat, on the border with Assam. Said Khongwir: "We cannot allow this extension as we fear that this will lead to a massive influx from outside and our people will then be swamped. We are a part of India but that does not mean that we can allow ourselves to be drowned by outsiders who will find the task easy as our people are simple and as yet backward compared to others." Elaborating his case, Khongwir added: "Look what happened in Tripura. The original inhabitants there are now being ruled and dominated by the Bengalis, most of whom had crossed over as refugees after partition of the country."

Meghalaya had seen an agitation against foreigners building up four years ago but it died down. However, Khongwir gave

ORISSA

In The Groove

ORISSA Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik has a new hobby. Whenever he gets free time he composes and translates devotional music. A product of his endeavours, a record of devotional music is now doing brisk sales throughout the state.

The record-jacket shows a saucer-eyed Jagannath, the ruling deity of the state. One song on it, *Chaka Akhire* was composed by the chief minister and all the rest were translated by him. And while the record may have been the chief minister's first venture in this direction it was no ham effort. All the top artists in the state were roped in to ensure its quality. The recording was done by Music India at the Kalinga Studios in Bhubaneswar.

Sure enough, the slick production has paid dividends. Within weeks of its release, the record has soared to the top of the Oriya charts. To some extent, this was hardly surprising since the people of the state have a fancy for such music. But it also owed its success to the fact that numerous state agencies have done their bit to popularise the record by buying it up in large numbers. Political Motives: The more cynical of his opponents

maintain that Patnaik got into the game solely for the publicity spin-offs. Says one dissident: "With the release of the record, the chief minister quickly found himself among the galaxy of saints and gurus and his image as a holy man among the people will soon help him in politics."

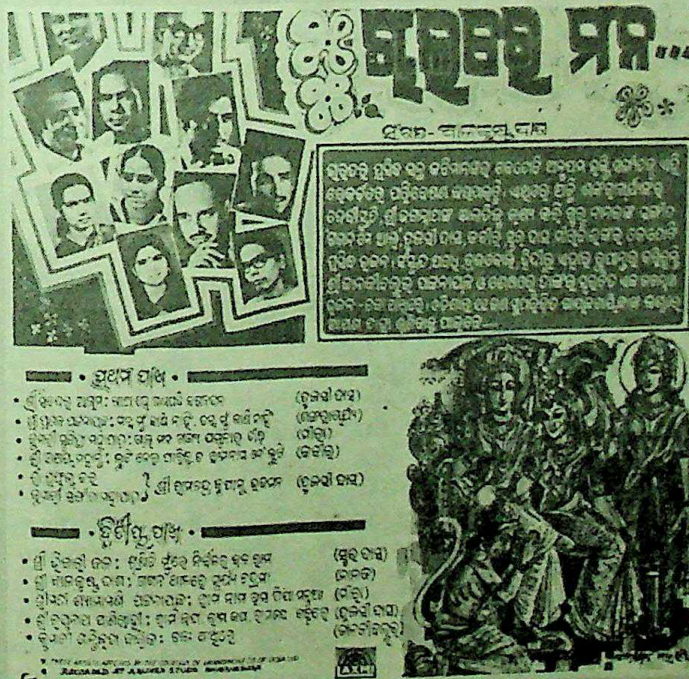
Patnaik naturally disowns such motives, saying: "No politics. I simply rendered the devotional songs of great saints into Oriya and I composed only one and these have become popular among the masses."



Besides his composing and translating, Patnaik has also been dabbling in other religious matters. Recently he decided to open a hundi at the Jagannath Temple. Patnaik says the decision was taken after consultations with senior leaders and intellectuals in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Some money will be used for the upkeep of the temple and some for the Sanskrit University at Puri. A part will also be set aside for the 15,000 *pandas*—temple servants—of the temple.

The *pandas* for whom the scheme is intended have, however, come out against the collection. Patnaik's opponents have rather uncharitably picked holes in this scheme as well. They say that collections zoom whenever Patnaik visits the temple. The chief contributors, they add, are an unsavoury host of corrupt contractors, engineers, officials and politicians, who are keen to win favour with the chief minister.

But now the *pandas* may be a little wary of taking on the chief minister. His musical compositions and translations have, after all, proved that he is a devout Hindu. And if his efforts do have a spin-off in the next elections there's always a flip side to every record. —FARZAND AHMED



The record jacket and (top) Patnaik: political harmony

enough indication that it could be revived soon. He referred to the immediate need to build up a movement against benami transfer of property whereby people from outside the state owned business enterprises which were shown to be in the name of Khasis who receive a pittance for this. Such sentiments must have pleased the hosts, the PLP, which has long advocated the creation of a north-eastern personality, distinct from the rest of India: in effect a single political party for the region which would seek to fight for a large measure of autonomy.

But last fortnight it was not sure whether this could be achieved. Said Kevichussa: "At the moment this appears to be a much more ambitious project." Khongwir pointed out: "There cannot be a single party for the entire region. The Assamese, the Nagas, the Mizos and the Khasis are all separate entities and there are basic differences relating to caste and culture." Even PLP Vice-President Ananda Borbora admitted that a single party was as yet a distant dream when he said: "That is the only way out but the others do not seem prepared for it right now. However, the fact that we have come together is in itself important."

Difficulties: In the process, however, the PLP has fallen out with the other regional party in Assam, the Asom Jatiyatabadi Dal, although both are constituents of the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad. Dal leaders have always felt that their only concern was Assam. Consequently, they refused to attend the conference. At the conference itself, the problems of projecting a united image were evident. Delegates made it clear that they should be treated as equal partners in a co-ordinated effort at projecting their common problems.

A counterpoint to the Gauhati meeting of regional parties was the conference of the regional Congress(I) units, a glittering jamboree at which speaker after speaker sought to project Indira Gandhi as the "supreme leader" and the panacea for all ills and at which sentiments like "the whole world values her opinion" were tossed around. Asked what purpose the conference had served, Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia said: "After the creation of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh from Assam there had been some ill-feeling among the people of these states and we felt this had to be done away with."

The "total support" pledged to Mrs Gandhi provoked a sarcastic retort from Borbora: "There was no need for them to have this meeting as they can do nothing on their own without a nod from Mrs Gandhi in distant Delhi." But as long as Borbora and other regional leaders do not pull together, distant Delhi will continue to have the final word.

—SUMANTA SEN in Gauhati

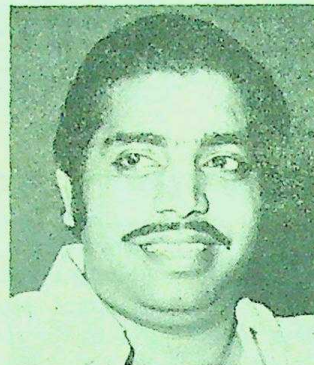
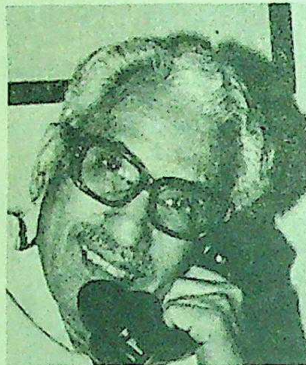
KERALA

Frontal Attack



CHIEF Minister K. Karunakaran is going to have to use every ounce of his political skill if he is to survive the current winter session of the state Assembly. The constant threat of defections has worn thin the morale of his ruling United Democratic Front (UDF). On the eve of the session last fortnight the UDF got a severe jolt when Congress(I) leader S. Varadarajan Nair quit the party and joined the Congress(S).

Varadarajan Nair's defection was



Karunakaran (left) and Chacko: battle for survival

thought by many people to be a taste of things to come. State Congress(S) President P.C. Chacko, who is spearheading an operation to bring down the UDF, predicts optimistically: "Nair's resignation is the forerunner of many things that are going to happen in Kerala." Nair, a former INTUC leader, preferred to give more lofty reasons for leaving, saying: "The Karunakaran Government's anti-labour policy for the past few months has pained me. I decided to quit because that alone was the option for a person with self-respect and loyalty and to the nation." Nair who was the finance minister in the earlier A.K. Antony ministry also claims that four other Congress(I) MLA's are likely to defect. He and other members of the INTUC faction resent the manner in which the INTUC state committee was constituted recently.

Divided House: The UDF that Nair left behind is, to say the least, a house at war with itself. Each faction is at odds with the other and some factions are about to split. The Kerala Congress (Joseph) and four dissident Congress(I) MLA's are perpetually threatening to quit. Some of its leaders are known to be in constant contact with the Marxists. However, there are indications that they are still in two minds about leaving.

The Joseph group, anyway, has its own dissensions which are not about to be overcome easily. Speculation is rife that it is also

on the verge of a split. Karunakaran smartly won over one of the group's prominent leaders, Education Minister T.M. Jacob, by sanctioning his post at the Gandhiji University. The university has been given speedy clearance despite precarious finances of the state.

If all this was not enough, Karunakaran is also having to face constant pressure from Congress(I) dissidents led by transport minister K.K. Balakrishnan. Balakrishnan seizes every opportunity to barrack Karunakaran. He has been spreading out rumours that he and three other ministers may join the Congress(S). He is also adding to the chaos by spreading stories that a group of former members of the Congress(I) (Antony) are on the verge of quitting the Congress(S). Said Balakrishnan: "Karunakaran has thrown out of the Cabinet. We have mutual hatred for each other."

With the UDF in a state of confusion, intent on hara-kiri the Marxists are finding themselves in a strong position. Only a few months ago the General Secretary of the Kerala E.M.S. Namboodiripad said that his party would attempt to convert a minority into a majority. Today the chief minister E.K. Nayanar is constantly clamouring for an alternative government. Nayanar is said to be planning to form an alternative government, resign and then go in for a fresh election. Said Nayanar: "After all, President's rule will be nothing but an extension of Karunakaran's rule by proxy."

The Marxists are also known to be reluctant to take on the burdens of government at this moment. The finances of the state are in such a parlous condition that liberal doses of financial assistance are expected to be needed just to carry on the administration.

Eventful Session: As the Assembly session moves into high gear it promises to generate lots of heat. Several important bills are on the anvil including the Anti-Corruption Bill, the Gandhiji University Bill and the Forest Bill, the Gandhiji University Bill and the Forest Bill, the Gandhiji University Bill and the Forest Bill. The Opposition is known to be keen on the Anti-Corruption Bill, and may hold its fire till then.

Karunakaran dismisses the crisis as more than a storm in a teacup. He has never flown to Delhi twice in the last year night to keep Mrs Gandhi abreast of events. It is said that he has good reason for his optimism as he can count on a few opposition MLA's defecting to his side if necessary. Last week Karunakaran met Baby John, an opposition leader. However, these moves might be in vain if the other side goes for the kill.

—SREEDHAR

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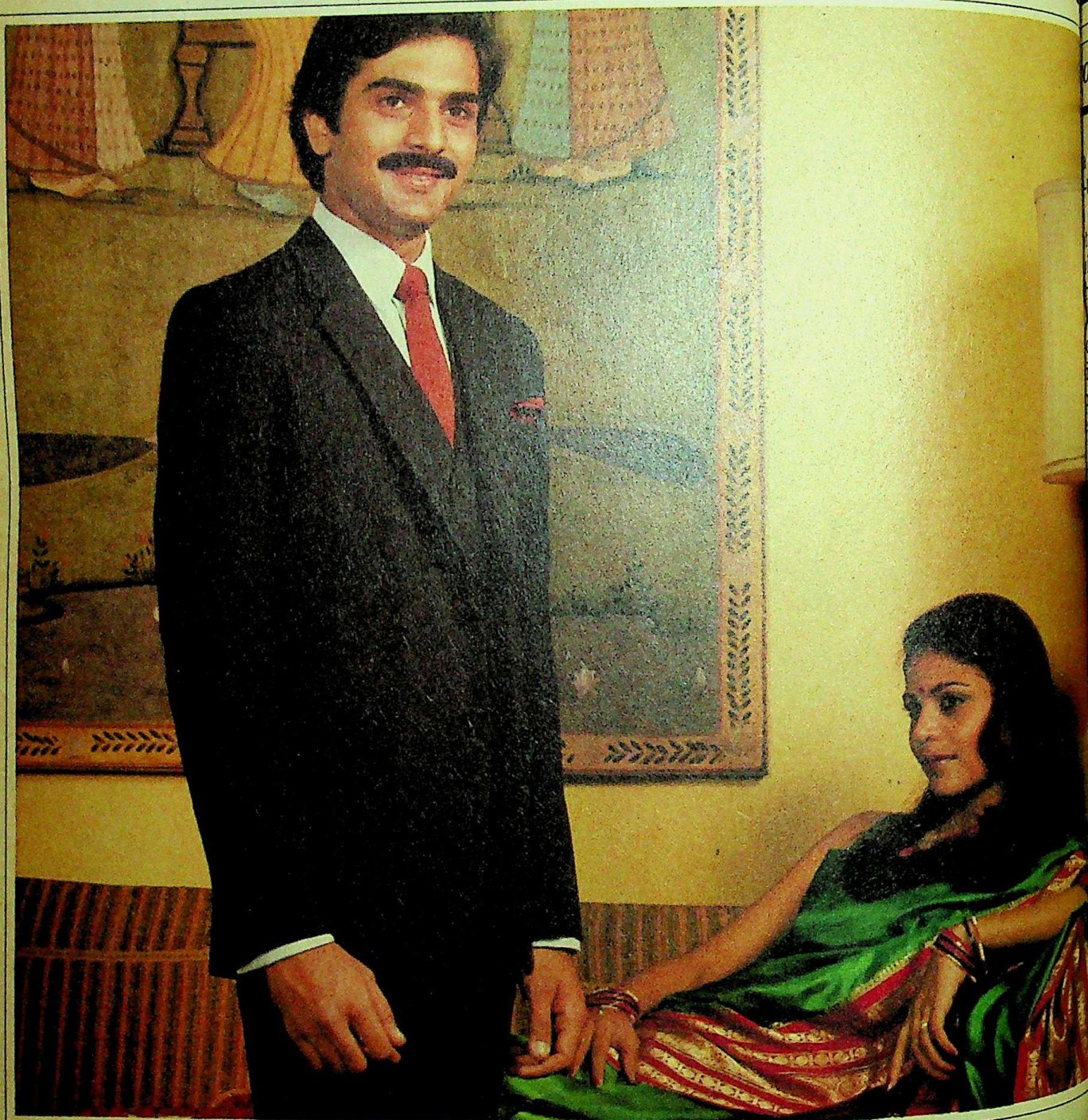
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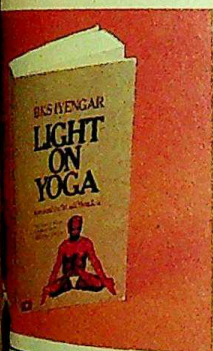
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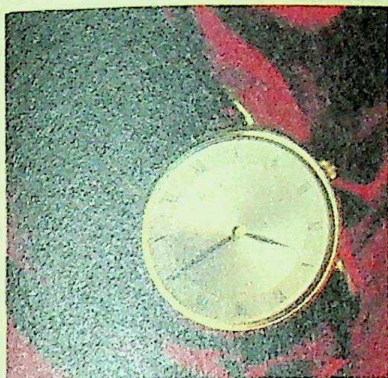
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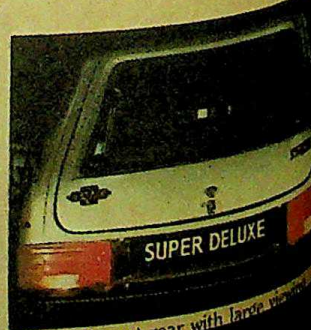
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Watchdogs on a Leash

ANDHRA Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao's well-publicised war against corruption appears to have got bogged down. Last month the appointment of the state's first lok ayukta, the state's first lok ayukta, chief justice Avula Sambasiva Rao, a minor crisis in the state administration, as there was already a watchdog in approximately the same function. E.V. Ram Reddi, appointed dharma matra (DMM) in February this year but with no statutory authority, immediately made the chief minister his own position as serious as the tasks of the DMM and the lok ayukta were similar. However, he was to continue at his post, without being told what his specific job would be.

But the Government is trying its best to accommodate its earlier candidate. According to Chief Secretary G.V. Lakshminarayana said: "A scheme is being worked out for the DMM, which will cover areas falling within the purview of the Lok Ayukta Act. Initially, officials whose pay is less than Rs 1,150 per month will come under the scheme." But he says it might take a month for the scheme to be implemented—an exercise that might in the end prove futile, as Reddi has already

expressed his lack of interest in a scheme that will allow him jurisdiction over just "peons and clerks".

Meanwhile this awkward duplication of roles has only helped spread confusion all around. But the appointment of the lok ayukta has come very handy for opponents of Reddi who found his manner of working arbitrary and high-handed. Quipped a senior administrator: "This is an example of mal-administration and injustice, and could perhaps be the first case for the lok ayukta to consider."

But Reddi has been working under constraints. Despite being appointed nine months ago, he was given no working guidelines. When repeated requests to the chief secretary to define his role proved futile, Reddi drew up his own plans and went into action. But when he summoned officers and called for files from departments across the board in the state's administration, doubts were raised about his right to do so. Although no one challenged his moves, the departments of law and municipal administration resisted by asking for written requests.

Ruffled Feelings: Reddi also has managed to alienate senior IAS and IPS officers who resent any kind of inquiry by the DMM or the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) into their

personal affairs. Said one officer: "The DMM is not an instrument of justice or fairplay, but an instrument of tyranny. He has suggested reviving the monthly report by the police intelligence to keep tabs on our personal lives. Are we living in a totalitarian state?"

Reddi maintains that in view of the unhealthy nexus developing between the administrative officers and the political bigwigs, his efforts are eminently justified. Says he: "Officers advise to the liking of political bosses, and not in terms of public interest, laws, rules and procedures, in order to promote their personal career. Increasing the tension between Reddi and the bureaucracy was his recommendation that two IAS officers, B.R.K. Sastry and E. Malkondayya, retire—they promptly opted for voluntary retirement instead.

Officers have also objected to the ACB making inquiries into charges against IAS and IPS officers without prior concurrence of the chief secretary. But Reddi says: "Once approval is given for the inquiry, even if preliminary, the ACB should have the authority to go ahead with the full inquiry and file a case. The ACB should have the freedom to initiate inquiry against all-India service officers and heads of departments. It is unfair to discriminate in favour of one class of officers, besides being legally indefensible."

Insubstantial Achievement: Predictably enough, few wide-ranging recommendations of the DMM have been accepted, let alone implemented by the Government. Apart from minor successes like the restoration of

BY-ELECTIONS

Early Warning

IT WAS the first warning. When Geetla Mukunda Reddi of the Congress(I) won the Peddapalli assembly by-election last fortnight by 21,175 votes to Telugu Desam candidate V. Ramanaiah's 19,921, Congress(I) leaders breathed easier. The by-election victory was the first after their crushing defeat in January, and the fact that CPI candidate Chennamaneni Rajeswara Rao complicated matters somewhat by polling 9,999 votes took little away from the victory. Crowded Reddi: "The cinema glamour of Rama Rao is fading and the common man is beginning to realise that the Telugu Desam can do nothing for him." Added district party strongman V. V. Subrahmanyam, MLC: "The Peddapalli verdict is against the corrupt and casteist N.T. Rama Rao brushes the defeat aside by saying that 'the party had yet no opportunity to serve the constituency'."

Telugu Desam General Secretary P. Upendra said coolly: "There is no loss or gain"—a reminder of the fact that, in January, Peddapalli had been won by the Sanjay Vichar Manch's G. Prakash Rao by 24,928 votes to the Congress(I)'s 18,501. Even in the Peddapalli Lok Sabha



A. PRABHAKAR RAO



Winners Rao (left) and Reddi

by-election in June, this assembly segment gave 21,345 votes to the Telugu Desam and only 10,645 to the Congress(I).

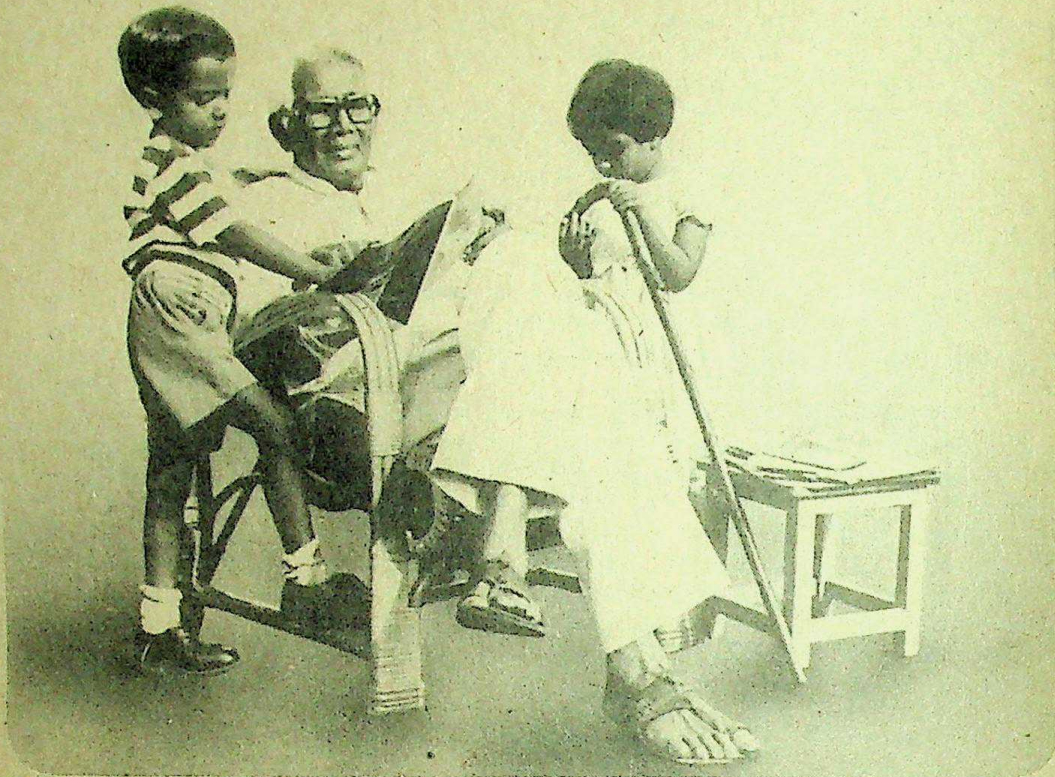
Dropping Votes: But Prakash Rao resigned from the Assembly after Maneka Gandhi expelled him from her

party, and the subsequent joust saw the ruling party dropping 7.2 per cent of the vote between January and November—although Rama Rao spoke at 52 meetings, up from the scheduled 44.

In that context, the Telugu Desam's victory in the second of the two November 13 by-elections in Andhra Pradesh, for the Martur assembly seat, fell a little flat. The more so because the party dropped 4.9 per cent of the vote, with a record 87 per cent votes polled, Dr D. Venkateswara Rao winning by only 4,552 votes over Congress(I) rival S. Chowdraiah, about half the January margin of 8,494 votes. Observed state PCC(I) President Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy: "Rama Rao's popularity is waning at a faster rate than we expected. Our workers have learnt the lesson that united, hard work yields positive results. Peddapalli is the watershed for the party's future in the state." And for the Telugu Desam's: Rama Rao will have to pull up his saffron socks if his creation is to stay ahead in the political race.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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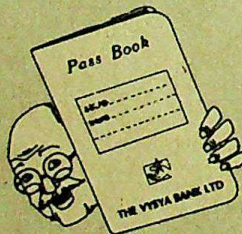


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to an engineer in Kurnool, or pension to a widow from Anagaram. Reddi has not been able to effect any spectacular coups. But neither is he in terms of wiping out corruption and maladministration. Says Samant Rao: "Many questions remain unanswered and the procedures to be adopted are yet to be clearly spelt out." The law is not clear on whether the investigation by the lok ayukta can be a substitute for regular departmental inquiries or the civil services rules, or whether action can be taken against any official on the lok ayukta's recommendation without further inquiry. Meanwhile, to add to the confusion, the chief minister has mooted the appointment of a 'nyaya maha matra' as one who is going to be in charge of cases where government officials are implicated. The chief minister has also said he would like to bring his own office under the review of the act, but he did not clarify whether this would be done by promulgating an ordinance. But before corruption can be checked, Rama Rao will have to apply his mind to first defining the various and overlapping functions of the state's multiple bodiesmen.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

ARAT

Tribal Rights

THE ATMOSPHERE is tense in tribal pockets of Broach district in east Gujarat after the murder last fortnight of the militant tribal leader, Manga Supad, 35, in Pithor village. Many believe the murder was engineered by Rajput landlords, threatened anew by the formation of the Mukti Dal, an organisation for tribal rights. Supad, a landless labourer, had been involved in organising tribals, mainly Bhils, in their fight against landlords to secure the payment of minimum wages and in their attempt to reclaim agricultural lands taken away illegally. Echoing the general feeling, Ukadbhai Vasava, a tribal leader, said: "He was killed for trying to give us minimum wages."

The tension between the landed and the landless suddenly escalated two years ago when the tribals struck work demanding the minimum wage of Rs 5.50 as against the Rs 2 they were receiving. The movement began in Supad's Pithor village, spread to 52 other villages in Valia taluka and 15 villages in the neighbouring Jhagadia taluka. In these months, State Reserve Police and

local police terrorised the tribals, even molesting their women, in their attempt to break the movement. With no alternative avenue of employment available, the tribals were forced to return to work to survive.

Planned Assaults: Ever since then, assaults on landless tribals have become a common form of intimidation. Bhanubhai Adhwarya, a well-known Gandhian working among the tribals had written in a monograph on the tribal uprising *Agnigarbh Valia* (In the Womb of Fire is Valia) that after Mohan Narsinh a tribal leader had been shot dead in mid-1981, the Rajputs had openly said that Manga Supad would be their next



Supad (inset) and widow Dalki with their children

target, then Chotubhai Vasava and later, Chandubhai Vasava.

Recently, Chandubhai Vasava, the sarpach of Luna village escaped a murderous assault by the armed guards of Rajput landlords. Fearing for their lives, he and 50 other tribals fled the village soon after. Sanat Adhwarya, a school teacher and an emerging tribal leader left Luna village one and a half years ago after two attempts were made on his life. Chotubhai Vasava has received letters threatening murder. Daudbhai Patel, another tribal leader, received a letter threatening that he would be treated like Mohan Narsinh, if he continued organising the tribals of the region.

Supad's murder seemed to fall in line with this pattern of unprovoked intimidation and assault. According to his wife Dalki, 22, Supad was tied and dragged out of their mud hut by 30 men, armed with spears and knives and stabbed brutally to death. Seventeen of the assailants were identified as belonging to Pithor village. Led by Roopsinh Nagchi, they were from one of the richest tribal families, owning over 60 acres of land, and a shop. Both Dalki and Supad's second wife Dasari, fear that the Rajputs got him killed as he was a growing force in the area. Said Dalki: "He often used to tell me that the big landlords have snatched away land from poor tribals and we should fight to get it back. His being a leader brought about

this tragedy." Daudbhai Patel also confirmed: "The tribal family who killed him had close connections with Rajput landlords. Anyway, it is clear that attempts are being made to wipe out tribal leaders."

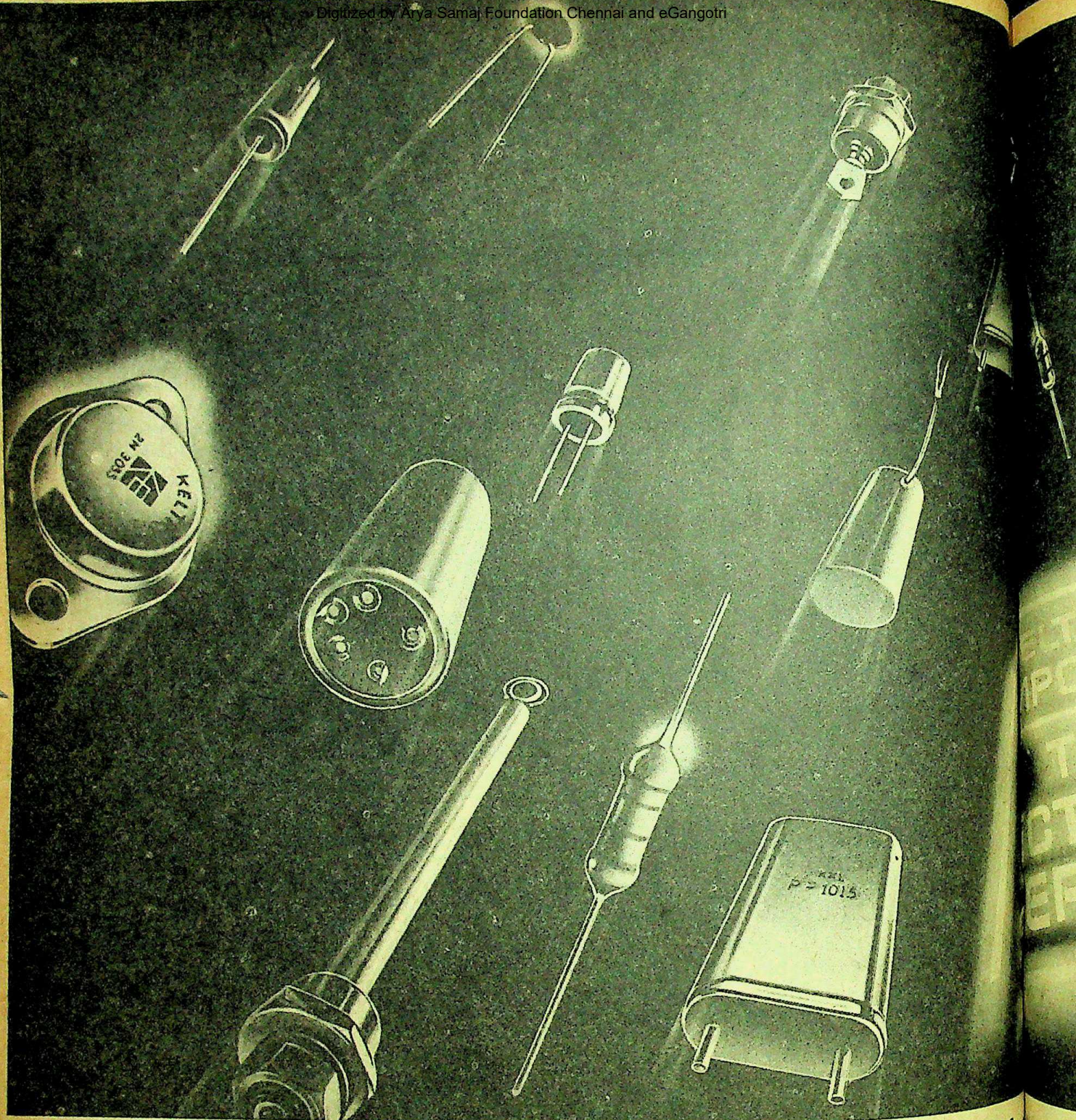
Under such demanding conditions the tribals have increasingly felt the need to organise themselves. The Mukti Dal has grown out of their sense of isolation and helplessness, for both the police and politicians remain insensitive and unconcerned. Reflecting this attitude Sanat Adhwarya said: "Many tribal leaders have received letters threatening that they would be killed. I got one of them, but none of us want to register a police complaint as the police in these areas belongs to the landlords."

Even K.V. Joseph, the deputy inspector general of police, sent to investigate police action during the uprising said that the rich landlords had oppressed the tribals, made them work at low wages after snatching their land by illegal means and were even controlling the police and politicians with their money. Said Patel: "The Rajputs, patidars and the landed gentry are oppressing us just as the British did. The Mukti Dal is our first attempt to create an awareness among tribals as we have realised that no political party is interested in giving us justice as the landlords control them."

Unconcerned: The two prominent Rajput leaders from this area, Harisinh Mahida, a Congress(I) Rajya Sabha MP and Mulji Sayania, Congress(I) panchayat president, have their explanation for the alienation of the tribals. Explains Sayania: "If Rajputs and patidars are owners of land today, it is because tribals were not guided properly to follow court procedures when the Land Tenancy Act was implemented. It is their fault, not ours." Sayania just brushed aside all allegations saying that there was no oppression of any kind. He justified the non-payment of minimum wages saying: "Nowhere in the country are minimum wages being paid."

That callous attitude is perfectly expressed in the bland statement by Ranchod Vasva of the Congress(I), who is also president of the Valia taluka: "Tribals are very happy here and have absolutely no problems. The Rajput landlords do not oppress or ill-treat tribals." It is clear that the tribals can expect no help from him and neither will they get any from their fellows elected to key posts in the panchayat and taluka bodies. Says Chotubhai Vasava: "Unfortunately they have become the stooges of landlords and do nothing to protect the interests of tribals." It is clearly going to be a long, lonely road to justice.

—RAMESH MENON

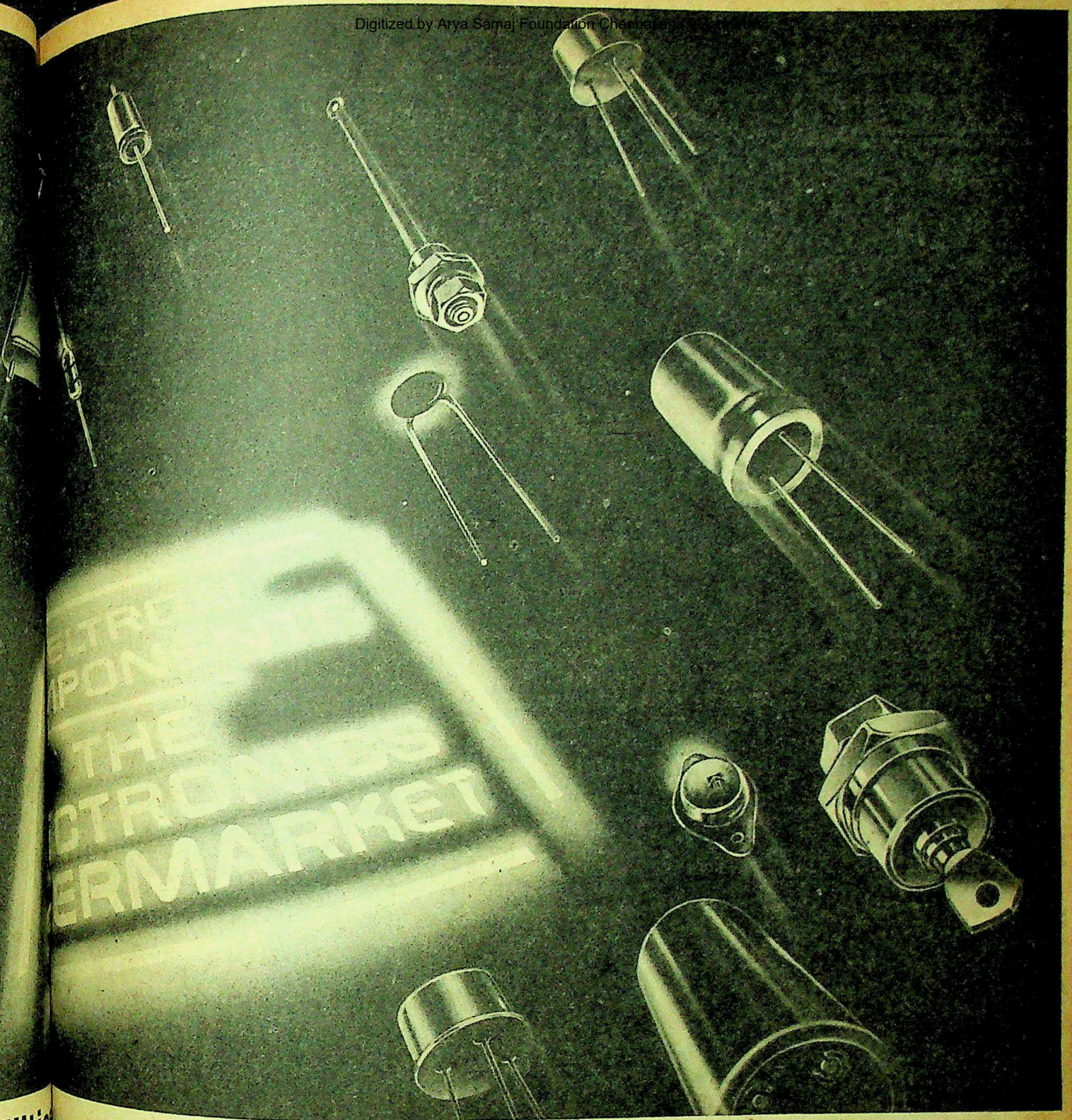


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ASSAM

Violent Reminders

IF CHIEF Minister Hiteswar Saikia of Assam nurtured any fond hopes that the anti-foreigners agitation was at last dying down, he quickly learnt otherwise on November 19. As he came out of Rabindra Sadan, Gauhati, after inaugurating a function to felicitate Mrs Gandhi on her birthday, Tridib Sarma, a second-year student of the Assam Engineering College, pointed a loaded revolver at him. Fortunately for Saikia, a police officer dragged the gun and the boy down before a shot could be fired, and the chief minister was hustled into his car and away to safety. The assassination attempt came not very long after a bomb at Gauhati railway station killed 17 people, and subsequent blasts that took another three lives, and was ample evidence that people opposed to the foreigners have no intention of giving up just yet. As Saikia himself admitted: "This is individual terrorism and it is very difficult to deal with this kind of problem, particularly as the persons concerned are all well-trained."

While Sarma has no history of extremism police sources feel that this was a case of a few youngsters operating on their own rather than as members of an organisation. They later arrested his parents father Prabodh Sarma, an additional chief engineer in the Assam State Electricity Board and mother Benu Sarma—on charges of complicity. Police sources admitted that Sarma was not in their files. They are looking into the antecedents of Romen Das, an agitation sympathiser from Dispur who gave Sarma the country-made. 22 bore revolver. Prabodh Sarma was once arrested under the Essential Services Maintenance Act during the February elections. While Benu Sarma was released on bail police continued to hold father and the son.

Hit List: Even as Saikia was recovering from the shock, Assam's senior intelligence officials once again began claiming knowledge of a hit list, purportedly prepared by extremists in AASU and AAGSP. One of them said: "For the last few months we knew of this list and the fact that the names included that of the chief minister, other ministers, senior police officers and leaders of political parties opposed to the agitation." The offi-

cials also reiterated their helplessness in the face of individual acts of terrorism; said one: "Even though we have tightened security measures around people who may be targets of attack, there is just no way in which we can make these foolproof."

Elaborating, a senior police officer added: "There is today a clear link-up between the Assam extremists and underground organisations in neighbouring states like the National Socialist Council of Naga-



Chief Minister Saikia: providential escape

land and the PREPAK of Manipur." He alleged that the Assam extremists supported such small but determined groups as Matri Mukti Bahini, Jatiyo Aikya Bahini and the Assam Peoples Liberation Army, a Naxalite group owing allegiance to Vinode Mishra. "In the last four years these groups have been able to raise bomb-making to the stature of a cottage industry in Assam and the explosives made here today are the best in the country," he added.

The Government says it cannot be a mere coincidence that the blast at the railway station took place shortly after AASU announced its decision to have road-blocks

during the prime minister's visit. Caught with such charges, AASU leaders have countered the counter-allegations that it was the riotous themselves who had engineered the blast "to serve as an excuse for communal atrocities on the student community." Nothing official on this has been said from the AASU office, word has gone round that middle class Assamese circles of the city that two officers had masterminded the explosion. However, the theory received credence a few days later when two students were seriously injured while making a bomb in Gauhati and one of them died.

Losing Support: With lives lost and panic once again pervading the state, a common thesis being propounded by all opponents of the agitation is that from Saikia to his aides in the administration to political parties like CPI(M) and Congress(S), the movement leaders have taken a wrong course to such terrorist methods because they are desperate, that they are losing popular support and are now trying to frighten people by supporting their cause and heeding to their various calls for bandhs and blockades.

Former chief minister Sarat Chandra Sarma, a Congress(S) leader, said the laymen's agitation began four years ago when people are today openly questioning the methods of its leaders. He pointed to a letter published in the Assamese daily *Dainik* in which Suren Medhi, an editor, had wondered about the necessity of such programmes as the 'bandh' which forces people to stay in darkness for hours together. He pointed out that while these problems for the common man hardly seemed to have any solution, the Government, Sinha, was busy that it was significant that the newspaper to carry the letter was *Asom*, known to be a close ally of the agitation.

To the propounders of the "lost port" thesis, the most handy indicator of the AASU's initiative in trying to organise a conference of national parties in Gauhati to discuss the question. Remarkably Nandewar, secretary of the CPI(M)'s Assam branch, welcomed this initiative. The party would lead anywhere but at least by convincing the AASU is showing signs of the importance of democratic process. The proposed conference itself has AASU some support. One of its closest Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP) student of the All Assam Gana

visit, is cut up at bringing political par-
 into the scene, which it still considers to
 irrelevant in the North-east. Said PLP
 Atul Bora: "We will have nothing to
 with this conference and have conveyed
 decision to AASU." But PLP Vice-Presi-
 Ananda Borbor views it as significant
 indication of the moderates' attempt
 regain control of AASU. But sounding a
 discordant note was the arrest of AASU
 General Secretary Bhrihu Phukan on No-
 vember 24 at Dimapur in Nagaland where he
 gone, with two lawyers, to seek the rele-
 of Joynath Sarma, the controversial and
 posed former chief of the AASU volunteer
 who had been arrested there a fortnight
 in connection with a
 of the bomb blast.

EVEN agitation leaders
 admitted that there had
 been differences in the
 organisation as to the kind of
 action to be resorted to
 during the prime minister's visit
 fortnight. The initial idea
 was to have a state-wide bandh
 for two days but the organi-
 sation's Goalpara district unit
 rejected. The prime minister's programme
 for Saral Sarma included the laying of the foundation stone
 of a bridge across the Red river at Jogighopa,
 Goalpara district, which had been a
 long-standing demand. AASU's Goalpara
 leaders argued with the central leadership that
 the road could well prevent the foundation
 laying ceremony and thus create popu-
 lar resentment against the organisation.

The differences are real and the Saikia
 is seeking to take advantage of this.
 Saikia knows that the agitation basic-
 ally is ground because of the long-stan-
 ding neglect of the state by the Centre and
 that the only way in which he can
 bring the wind out of AASU sails is by demon-
 strating to the people that it is not AASU but
 the Government which can help redress their grie-
 vances. The steps he has taken to ensure this

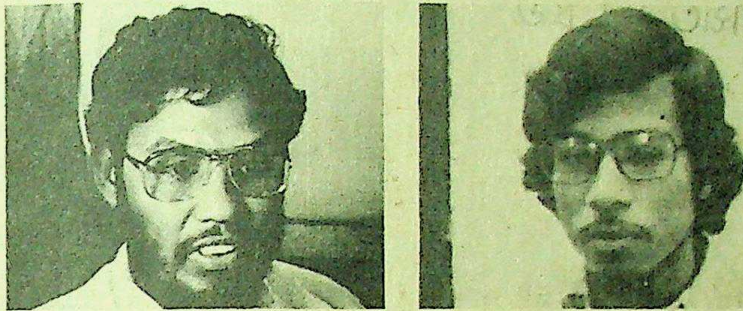
Getting the Centre to start work on the
 Jogighopa bridge.

Getting the railways to speed up work
 extending the broad gauge railway up to
 Tezpur, a much-needed step which the
 Government had been stalling for decades.

Getting the Centre to declare Gauhati a
 port so that from next year the Assam tea
 would not have to pay Entry Tax to
 Bengal, even though the tea might be
 shipped from Calcutta.

Publicising his efforts to get the Centre
 to set up a naphtha based petro-chemical
 plant in Gauhati and initiating discuss-
 ion with tea and jute companies to shift
 their headquarters to Gauhati.

That Saikia's determined efforts
 to win the hearts and minds of the
 people have met with some success, however
 small, was evident from the over
 50,000-strong crowd that gathered at Gau-
 hati's Judges Field to hear Indira Gandhi
 speak during her visit last fortnight. Even a
 few months ago this would have been un-
 heard of. Opposition leaders like Sinha
 maintain: "All these people belonged to the
 minority communities and had been brought
 in buses from Goalpara, Nowgong and Dar-
 rang." But non-partisan observers insist that
 this was definitely not so. Even Talukdar did
 not agree with Sinha and said: "People from
 all shades of the community came to that



Joynath Sarma (left) and Phukan: crackdown

meeting. It is a healthy sign as it shows that
 people today are keen on listening not only
 to AASU but to others."

AASU refuses to acknowledge that the
 movement is dying. Both President Prafulla
 Mahanta and General Secretary Bhrihu
 Phukan pointed out that while the entire go-
 vernment machinery had to be geared to
 bring people to Mrs Gandhi's meeting, the
 response to the AASU call for road blockades
 and black-outs had been spontaneous, suffi-
 cient indication of the people's support. But
 at the same time AASU leaders are aware that
 the stalemate would make it an immensely
 difficult task to keep up the agitation's
 tempo.

Evidently, they also are now keen on
 seeing some sort of honourable solution and
 blame the prime minister squarely for "refus-
 ing to see that the problem was settled.
 Instead she is encouraging more and more
 infiltration with the specific purpose of up-
 setting the social balance to serve her own
 political interests". The implication clearly is
 that having come into power in Assam ess-
 entially on a minority vote, the Congress(I) is
 now keen on bolstering the strength of these
 people which would stand them in good
 stead in the future. But as Saikia said: "We
 have not broken up the dialogue with AASU.
 The talks have been kept suspended and will
 be resumed only when we feel the time is ripe
 for doing so. And after four years of agita-
 tion and with the initial euphoria of the
 masses no longer in evidence, there is little
 that AASU can do but accept this situation."

However, at present the main obsta-
 cle to the attempts to revive democratic
 norms and procedure is the extremist threat.
 The public panic is real. Last fortnight AASU
 had given the call for a two-hour "lights off"
 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. but even after 7 p.m.
 shops remained closed and streets lay des-
 erted in large downtown areas of Gauhati like
 Pan Bazar, Shilpukhuri and Chanmari, clear
 indication that people were still not willing to
 take any chances. The Government itself has
 contributed to the sense of panic by per-
 sisting with its order which prohibits scoo-
 ters and auto-rickshaws from plying after 6
 p.m. thus creating tremendous inconveni-
 ence and adding to the current tension.

Unable to check the acts of
 violence, the administration
 seems to be pinning its hopes on
 the inevitability of these fading
 away in the face of "growing
 popular resentment". Of the 20
 tribunals to be appointed to
 identify foreigners four have al-
 ready been notified and are ex-
 pected to begin work soon.
 Saikia hoped that once the pro-
 cess started, "we will be able to
 convince the people of our ge-
 nuine desire to deal with the problem". Ho-
 wever, the work of the tribunals entails a lot
 of cooperation from the people and cannot be
 taken for granted: how far, after all, will
 people go to spy on their neighbours.

Sinha makes another point: "The pro-
 visions that any person may make an appli-
 cation against an illegal migrant are fraught
 with danger of creating more mistrust and
 misunderstanding among different sections
 of the people who are now trying to settle
 down in peace and amity. It is more than evi-
 dent that the Government is interested more
 in prolonging the issue for its political ends
 and in keeping a fear psychosis alive in the
 minds of the minorities than in removing it."

While the future will show the truth in
 Sinha's accusations, the Government is cur-
 rently not hesitating to counter violence with
 violence. At the same time it is seeking to assu-
 age popular feeling. Saikia is obviously trying
 to separate the main movement from the ex-
 tremist violence and to isolate the latter. Last
 fortnight both he and his administration
 were supremely confident of being able to do
 so. Even his opponent Sarat Sinha admitted:
 "It is like a battle between a snake and a
 mongoose. The AASU snake has struck too
 often but failed to get at the Government
 mongoose which has maintained a safe
 distance. With each strike the snake has
 become weaker and weaker and now the
 mongoose will jump for the final kill." But in
 the light of the recent resurgence of violence,
 that may prove a premature prediction.

—SUMANTA SEN in Gauhati



Mishra presiding over Mrs Gandhi's birthday function: open war

BIHAR

The Birthday Bash

HER PARTY dutifully celebrated Mrs Gandhi's birthday last fortnight with loud slogans of the 'national integration week'. But in Bihar such slogans only provided an ironic counterpoint to the unmistakable sounds of battle within the Congress(I). While former chief minister Jagannath Mishra roared like a wounded lion, his successor, Chief Minister Chandra Shekhar Singh broke his three-month-long silence and thundered right back.

Though both still spoke from platforms displaying heavily garlanded portraits of their 'leader', it was clear that the hitherto simmering antagonism was now unambiguously out in the open. "Nobody can take away my right to be loyal to my leader as an ordinary worker," said Mishra. "Criticism and doubts do not reflect one's loyalty. Those who attack from behind the scene and from within the party are more deadly than the Opposition," shot back Singh.

Ironic Timing: But Mishra had evidently planned his strategy with an eye to popular emotion and a keen sense of history. He launched a whirlwind tour of seven districts on November 14, Panditji's birthday, to arouse for his leader 'lok shakti' and 'lok chetna'—the very slogans used by Jayaprakash Narayan to launch his movement against Mrs Gandhi's 'misrule' in 1974.

On Mrs Gandhi's birthday on November 19, he organised a parallel party show at Adalatganj maidan in Patna. Among the large crowd were 60 party legislators, 25 of the 33 district Congress(I) chiefs, a large

number of former ministers and block and panchayat level party heads—all personally invited by Mishra to discuss the 'Twenty Point Programme and National Integration.'

Disgruntled Members: The message was clear. Mishra was ready to break away and go all out to bring down the Singh Ministry—after the series of setbacks culminating in expansion of the state ministry in late October without his advice. Most galling was the humiliation of being kept out of the schedule for Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Patna.

Mishra told the convention: "There is a calculated move to isolate me but I will remain loyal to Mrs Gandhi." His campaign began, in fact, during Rajiv's recent visit to the state. On the Loknayak's birthday he visited the late leader's residence to pay homage. He said: "I have respect for JP and I want to create people's power as envisaged by the departed leader"—ostensibly for the successful implementation of Mrs Gandhi's twenty point programme and to check political and bureaucratic corruption.

But despite these stated ideals, word went round soon after that people close to the state Janata Party chief, S.N. Sinha, had approached Mishra to join that party. However, Mishra himself denied that he had struck a deal with Sinha. "Only a fool can think of this. I will never revolt," he said.

On the other hand, he made strong statements complaining against Central neglect of Bihar and attacking the state Government for slashing and even scrapping welfare programmes launched by his government. In this belligerent mood, he found a number of

supporters in the wake of the recent expansion.

For the Congress(I), Mishra's stand assumed added meaning in the larger context of opposition in the State PCC(I) chief Ram Sharan Singh after agreeing to attend the function. He dissociated himself from it, said: "Only before this meeting Mishra has repeated charges against the Centre at Mumbai. He is speaking in the language of J. I. Farooq Abdullah and N.T. Rama Rao, a partyman or Indira-loyalist can make type of speech."

But Mishra gave his answer at the convention: "Nobody can bully me by taking my function which is in the interest of the party... If I speak about the state's backwardness, I become anti-party but I do not object when the chief minister himself says the same things before the Eighth Commission or in Calcutta in the presence of Jyoti Basu." Singh answered the charge by bringing up the gut issue. "Nobody has permanent claim on the chief minister's ship. It is a post to serve the people and to serve one's own interest," he said.

Widespread Opposition: His move was possibly prompted by the rising danger not only inside the party but from outside. At about the same time, erstwhile chief minister was getting together, the Communist Party of India, which had welcomed the formation of the ministry, launched a 'Bihar Bachao' movement. On November 15, thousands of workers attended a public rally in Patna dressed by party General Secretary J. J. jeshwara Rao.

And if Singh's cup was brimming, it surely overflowed when on the very day Mishra was addressing his convention about a lakh of people thronged Patna to declare an armed struggle against feudal lords and the pro-landlord police in Bihar. Meanwhile, other leaders like Karpooori Thakur, leader of the Opposition, have repeatedly demanded Singh's resignation as he is unable to curb police violence and the collapse of the state's administration.

Attention is now focussed on the session of the Assembly scheduled for on December 8. With 60-odd legislators openly supporting Mishra, and the possibility of more responding to his appeal for followers to unite and face the challenge, Singh is likely to have a tough time.

He said: "We are ready to face the challenge but we are not in a hurry... We tried to harass us out of revenge, we are back in a besitting manner." But the look of things in Patna, the fight is well under way.

—FARZAN



POLYESTER

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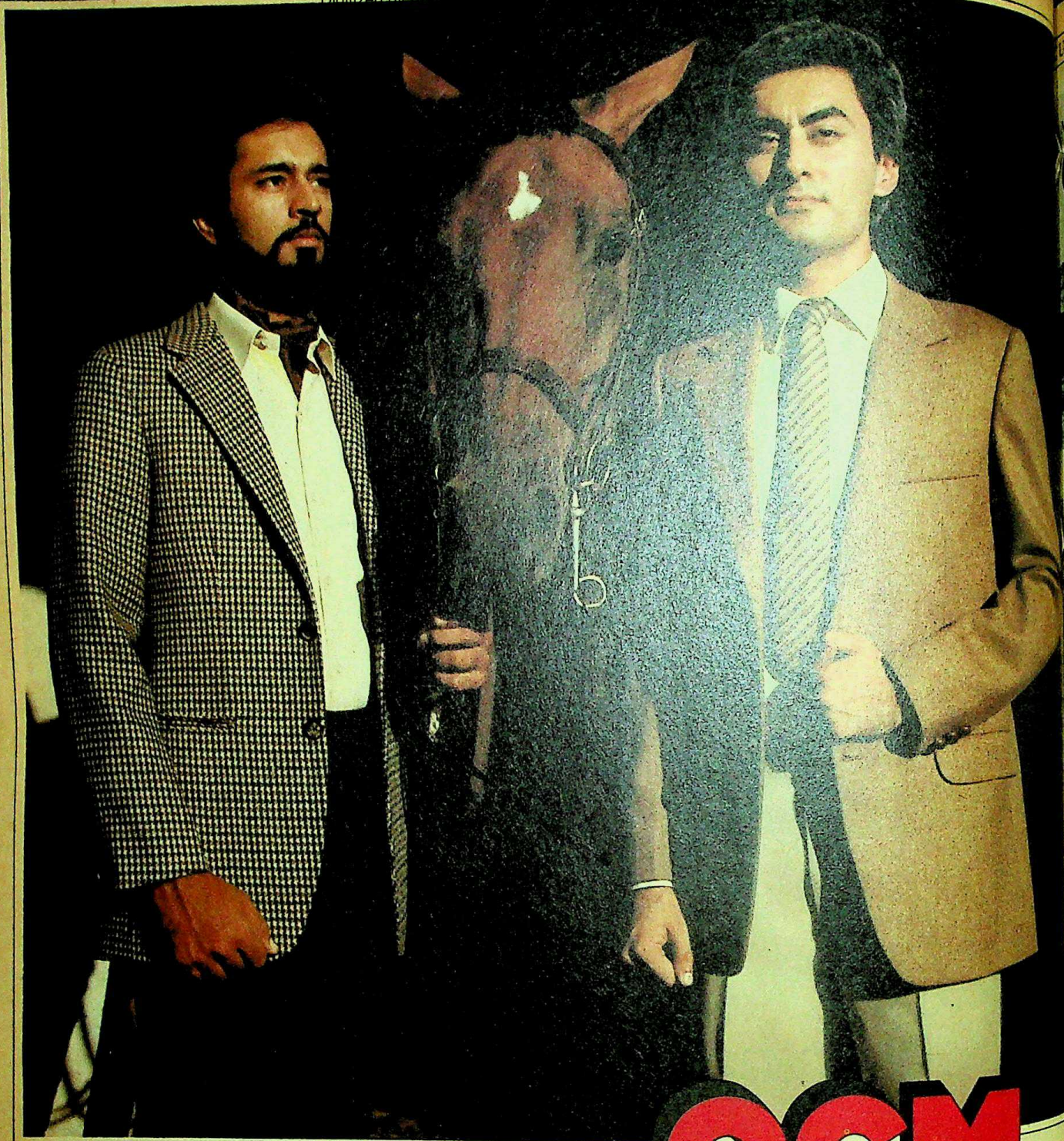
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On The Chopping Block



The slaughterhouse building and (right) Subberwal: provoking passions

THE SITUATION was tailor-made for violence: a slaughterhouse in a communally sensitive town with a delicately balanced proportion of 55 per cent Muslims and 45 per cent Hindus. Last

night, four persons died in police firing in the powerloom town of Bhiwandi, 55 km from Bombay, after a crowd of 15,000 marched on its outskirts to protest against a Rs 4 crore abattoir project. Other casualties were more than 50 people injured, including seven policemen, five state transport buses and two auto-rickshaws burnt, a petrol pump and a shop set on fire—and 43 arrested. Bhiwandi town itself was peaceful except for the stone throwing as the procession moved through the main town and found shops open.

Both Muslims and Hindus alike are opposed to the slaughterhouse, which will be used to process 150,000 buffaloes and thrice the number of sheep every year. Says Prafulla Bhoire of nearby Sawande village: "Can the Government ignore our sentiments in this manner? You can see how strongly people feel on the issue by the fact that negotiators came from miles away—only

about 4,000 were from Bhiwandi proper." Qasim Samru, secretary of the Muslim Democratic Forum, observed: "The slaughterhouse will not only drive up the prices of meat and milk but will only increase communal tension." Salim Mohammed agrees: "The Government should not ignore the religious sentiments of the people." Significantly, the bandh after the firing, was observed by both communities.

Modern Venture: The slaughterhouse which has prompted this solidarity is the first private abattoir in the country and is the ambitious brainchild of Al-Kabeer, a flourishing export firm run by Satish Subberwal and Ghulam Shaikh. The meat is to be exported exclusively to the Middle East. Subberwal says that the anti-abattoir campaign is motivated by "misguided elements out to make political capital", and says that the project will benefit the Bhiwandi countryside and earn valuable foreign exchange by utilising India's vast untapped buffalo



resources: there are an estimated 52 million female buffaloes in India and assuming that around 10 per cent are non-lactating this means a potential 5 million for slaughter. Maharashtra alone is said to have some 120,000 extra buffaloes.

The economics of the operation, however, leaves the campaigners quite cold. What is unusual is that all political parties have opposed the slaughterhouse unitedly—although the chairman of the anti-abattoir committee is Dr B.P. Vyas of the BJP. One of the firing victims was Shantaram Mhatre, Congress(I) sarpanch of Kalhar village, 4 km away. Datta Samant's Shetkari Sena is also in the fray: Sena President Rattan Mhatre, who has been concentrating on the slaughterhouse issue in speeches for the last few months, was arrested along with many other Sena workers during the march. And Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray adds his bit categorically: "We don't want the abattoir here at any cost."

The basic handicap of the abattoir is its location. While the project report claims that it is located far from human habitation, Sawande is just half a kilometre away and two other villages lie within 3 km. The site is just off Bhiwandi municipal limits and the main Bombay-Agra road. The villagers say that last year when work at the site first began they were informed that a housing colony was coming up. Baburao Kane, sarpanch of Sawande, who works as a casual labourer has signed a 'no objection certificate' for construction, but now says he was duped by the secretary of the panchayat, who belongs to a rival party, into affixing his signature, without understanding what the document in Marathi was.

Environmental Problems:

Vyas says that the farmers fear that their environment will be polluted and their drainage and

drinking water disrupted. He claims: "The whole scheme has been hustled through because some people with influence at the Centre were obviously interested." Vyas notes that the Thane collector gave an NA certificate (allowing non-agricultural use of agricultural land) for 25 acres in April 1982, even before the project report and the certificate from the Maharashtra Prevention of Water and Air Pollution Board had been submitted. The villagers have now filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court.

The abattoir will require 2 million litres of water daily, about 10 per cent of Bhiwandi's total water supply. Subberwal says they have sunk seven borewells with a capacity of



Buses burnt during the violence and (above right) Vyas: united opposition

MAY, DECEMBER 15, 1983

1,000 litres per hour each, but residents are sceptical because no borewell in the vicinity has functioned so productively and fear that the project will end up using the depleted river water or the town's supply.

They also fear that the nearby Kamwari river will be used for dumping effluents, a suspicion strengthened by the fact that the project talks of using the Ulhas drain, which is nowhere near the area. After this inconsistency was pointed out Subberwal changed the company's stand and now says that the waste water will be recycled for use and the residue used in fish tanks and for irrigation. Treated solid waste will be sold to poultry farmers. Subberwal claims that the waste water with its rich protein content is like "gold".

Animal Fodder: Another constant problem is where the abattoir will get the buffaloes: 500 of them daily. Asks A.S. Patil, a farmer: "Where will they get such a large number of buffaloes unless they turn to milch cows and draught animals?" But Subberwal insists that putting milch buffaloes through the mill is unremunerative: one costs between Rs 6,000 and Rs 8,000 while the non-milch ones cost a little over Rs 1,000. Ajay Patil, a dairy farmer, contests the policy of killing off milch buffaloes when they temporarily turn non-lactating: "In Bombay some of our best milch buffaloes coming from other parts of the country are automatically sent to the slaughterhouse after they stop giving milk, which is extremely damaging from the point of view of improving the livestock breed and does not happen anywhere else in the world."

There is also no danger of air pollution, Subberwal insists. Says he: "Modern, partially air-conditioned slaughterhouses are like hospitals. Our present slaughterhouses are 100 years behind the times and totally obsolete." The new abattoir will process the meat for preservation in a specially cooled environment, in temperatures that will be as low as minus 20°C.

The technological innovations promised, unfortunately, have done nothing to assuage Bhiwandi. And the Government, which had earlier done nothing hoping that the problem would go away, is now in a quandary. The National Bank of Agriculture and the Punjab National Bank have loaned almost Rs 1 crore, equipment worth Rs 1.5 crore has been imported and the sheds are half ready. Says Subberwal: "We have been at pains to educate the people in a door-to-door campaign and even distributed leaflets to clarify any doubts." But the locals are yet to be convinced and the project is quickly assuming the volatility of a gunpowder factory.

—COOMI KAPOOR

MAHARASHTRA

Only Losers



THE RECENT by-elections in south-west Maharashtra at Sangli and Patan has thrown up no winners, only losers. The chief minister's wife, Shalinitai Patil, retained her husband's Sangli parliamentary constituency by an embarrassingly reduced majority and the Patan assembly seat went to the rebel Congressman Vikram Singh Patankar. Despite Congress(S) President Sharad Pawar's claim that the results were a "triumph for the Opposition," in fact, it was the infighting within the Congress(I) rather than the magnetic pull of the Opposition which was the deciding factor. Though the combined opposition had supported Patankar they were unsure enough of him to threaten to gherao the Patan victor if he decided to rejoin the ruling party from which he had been suspended.

When Chief Minister Vasantdada Patil stood from Sangli, in 1980, he won by 1,67,000 votes. This time Shalinitai found her margin sliced down to a mere 35,805 votes. Most disturbing, she lost the Miraj assembly segment and retained the Sangli assembly constituency by a mere 2,552 votes even though Vasantdada had won from the seat two months earlier by 39,000 votes. Both husband and wife conceded that the victory was not up to expectations and they put the blame squarely on the "sabotage" by loyalists—specifically, former chief ministers, A.R. Antulay and Babasaheb Bhosale.

Countercharge: In Patan it was the other way round with the loyalists accusing Patil and Y.B. Chavan of supporting Patankar against the official candidate Shivajirao Desai, son of Balasaheb Desai, whose death had brought on the by-election. Shivajirao lost to Patankar by 11,000 votes though his father had held the seat for three decades. It was MPCC(I) President N.M. Kamble who insisted on Shivajirao's candidature even though Patil and Chavan had sponsored Patankar who is far better known in the constituency.

Feelings were so high that both Patils at separate press conferences accused some loyalists of undermining Shalini's campaign. Shalinitai confessed that she had lost the support of 30,000 Muslims and 40,000 Digamber Jains. The minority groups which have supported the Congress(I) for the last three decades had made a sudden volte-face at the last moment. This, she alleged,



Shalinitai Patil

was because huge sums of money were pumped into the constituency at the moment. "The day before the polls, I was told that all the Muslim Congress(I) workers had disappeared from our booths," she claimed, a Jain weekly brought out an issue alleging that the local Digamber Yellacharya Maharaj Guru had issued threats from Shalinitai. She noted that Ratanappa Kumbhar, who is a close associate of Bhosale, was an adviser of the Maharaj.

Bhosale was equally critical in his response: "Shalinitai's meaningless chatter does not deserve any response at this stage." He warned that the pattern of alienation of minorities continued throughout the state, it would prove disastrous for the party. One reason why the Jains are upset is that Shalinitai is said to be responsible for erecting a statue of Shivaji at a Jain shrine in Kolhapur. Bhosale noted that several of Vasantdada's relatives were members of the Andolan, a fact which would not have done well with the minorities.

Image Damaged: Shalinitai also admitted that the controversial tea party held by the party's loyalists early this month had also harmed the party's image. She remarked grily: "We were trying to tell the people that Vasantdada Patil has provided a stable government to Maharashtra and that he was giving an impression that Dada is about to be toppled."

Patil is still keen to mend fences with some of his opponents. Deputy Chief Minister Ramrao Adik and N.K. Tirkar, for instance, are showing every sign that they have reached an understanding with the chief minister. A close associate of Baburao Bhatpe, cancelled plans for a meeting on November 26.

But Patil's opponents are confident that the present lull in dissidence is only temporary. They point out that the high command is aware that Patil and Chavan, could not have joined hands with Pawar. The loyalists also hope to gather strength when they meet together for the winter session of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on November 28. A party meeting scheduled by Kamble may also see fire.

Even if Patil survives for now, his opponents hope that he will be deposed in the next elections, or else not be given a second term if candidates are selected. If nothing else, Vasantdada's poor health should work against him. Last fortnight, a Health Minister, while sitting at the secretariat had to be helped to his room when he fell asleep. But in the face of all these constraints he is still keeping rivals at bay.

—COOMI KAPOOR

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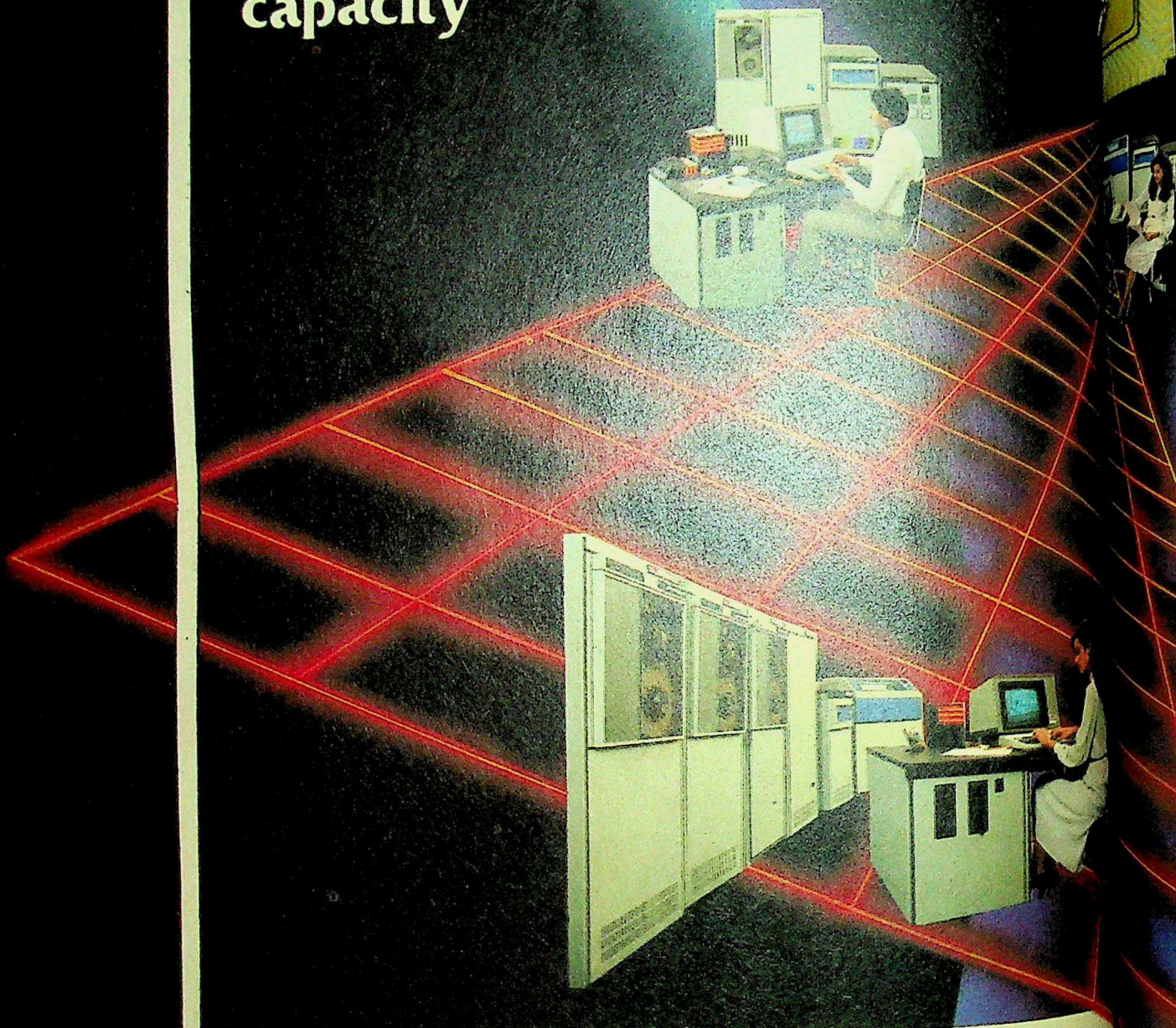
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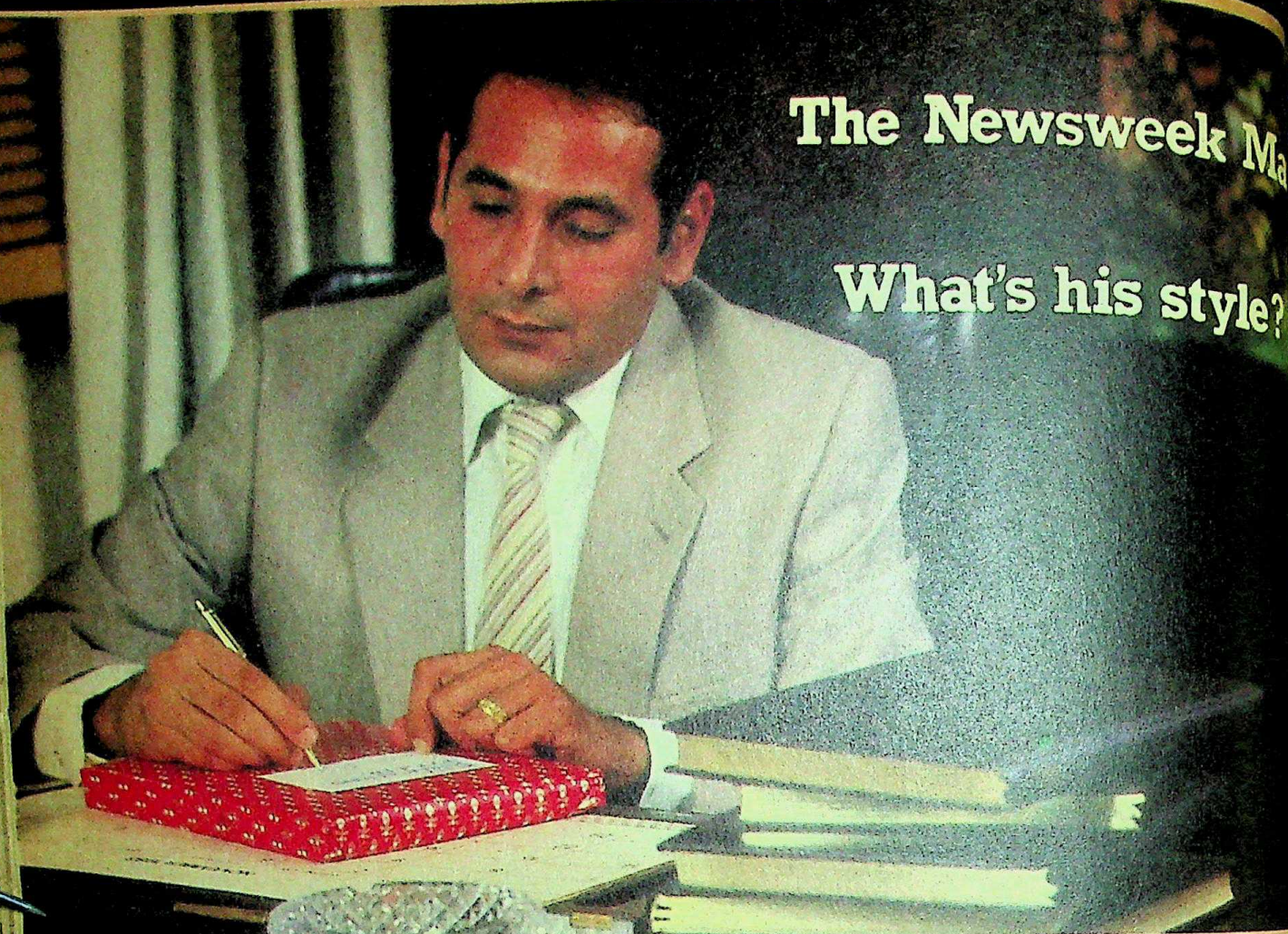
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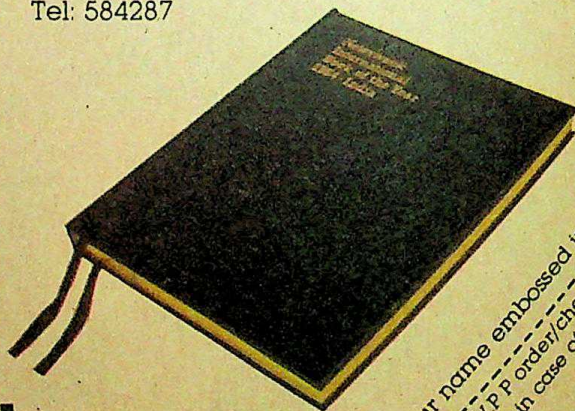
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Hostling for Place

THERE are not too many in the Congress(I) ranks in West Bengal who are happy at the way the plenary session of the All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I)—scheduled to be held end-

member—is being organised. The biggest opposition comes from the Chhatra Parishad (I), the most well-knit of the party's sub-committees which is also the most at being bypassed in the organisational process. Fumed Parishad President Subrata Mukherjee: "We will no longer allow a party high command to impose its decisions on us and make us appear redundant in public view."

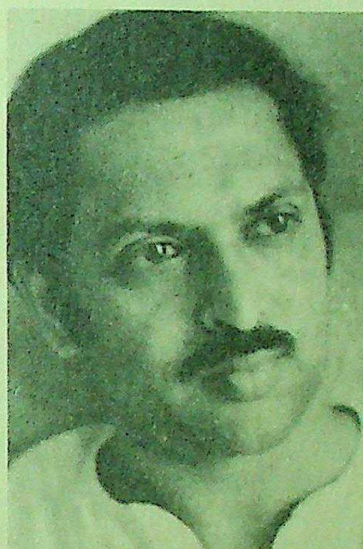
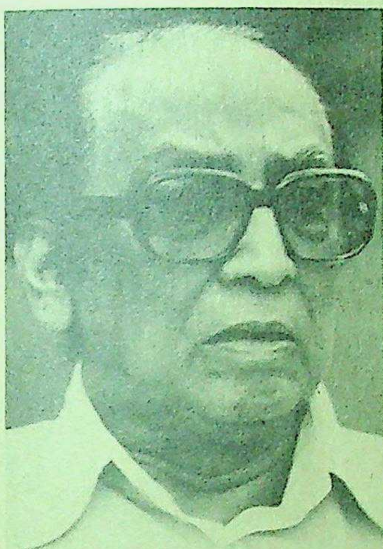
The trouble started when the high command appointed Ashoke Sen to control the show. Sen is an eminent lawyer and MP and has been in the Congress for years. But he has few links with the organisation and spends most of his time in Delhi where the Supreme Court keeps him busy. Moreover, the normal practice is to vest the state president—in this case Ananda Gopal Mukherjee—with this kind of authority. As a result of the slight, Ananda kept himself conspicuously absent last fortnight from Pragya Bhavan, the building where the session is being organised.

That did not, however, stop Subrata from bringing his resentment out into the open—especially when his and legislator Subrata Khaitan's powers to operate bank accounts for the reception committee were suddenly taken away. Said he: "I felt hurt when Ashoke Sen did this but kept quiet, just as I did when he had been appointed chairman of a decision which I did not like. But I decided to protest when I found Ashoke Sen bent on keeping the Chhatra Parishad out of the

Crucial Organisation: With a membership of 75,000, the Chhatra Parishad cannot be ignored. It is the best organised of the party's groups and the only one that can pose a serious threat to the Marxists on the front. That by itself has always made it to be reckoned with in the Congress(I). Ashoke Sen made the further mistake of offending a prominent Chhatra Parishad leader, Jayanta Bhattacharya.

As a result, the organisation decided not to cooperate with the plenary session and to hold sit-in demonstrations during its tenure "to attract the attention of the prime minister to the way party affairs were being handled in West Bengal". Ashoke Sen, who was then away in Delhi, rushed back to Calcutta and at a late night meeting with Subrata Mukherjee agreed to accommodate the Chhatra Parishad representatives in the various subcommittees.

That should have settled the matter. It didn't. The very next day, at a meeting to discuss plans for the plenary session, Subrata



Ashoke Sen (left) and Subrata Mukherjee: acrimonious rivalry

Mukherjee was repeatedly jeered. At one stage, Ashoke Sen remarked angrily: "Who are all these people?" Subrata sprang up: "Why ask these questions? They are all your people. You brought them to insult me but you should have brought more than the handful that have gathered here."

The Chhatra Parishad's humiliation is a serious affair. It began demanding greater representation in the subcommittees. At the same time, a rival group led by Subrata's arch enemy Somen Mitra also began demanding a strong representation. Ashoke Sen fled to Delhi and a decision about the convenors of the 17 subcommittees was held up.

With Sen away, Subrata Mukherjee's supporters struck at another leader, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, who has recently joined the party after leaving the Congress(S). Das Munshi, as head of the publicity subcommittee was given the task of briefing the press and after he had done this on a couple of occasions, Subrata Mukherjee raised an objection on the ground that he

was merely seeking to get publicity for himself. As a result, Das Munshi cancelled an announced press briefing at the last minute.

Ambiguous Status: There is also considerable confusion about the status of the reception committee. Soon after its formation, a steering committee was suddenly announced, consisting of Ashoke Sen, Pranab Mukherjee, A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury, Abdus Sattar, Gopal Das Nag and Ananda Gopal Mukherjee. This is supposed to be the supreme policy making body for the plenary session. About the reception committee, said Chairman Ashoke Sen: "I am not interested in names. It is the work that matters." The new committee has as its convenor the state PCC(I) President Mukherjee, but it is clear that he has little authority as during Sen's frequent and prolonged sojourns in Delhi, the Congress(I) office wears a listless look with nobody knowing quite what to do.

The reason why the various groups in the state Congress(I) are so keen on getting into the various subcommittees, is primarily because the plenary session is being held amidst continued speculations about organisational changes. Consequently, faction leaders are apprehensive that if they fail to secure adequate representation now, a similar fate may await them when the organisational changes take place. Moreover, with the Lok Sabha elections not too far away, none

of the factions would like to lose any ground in the organisation as then there will be the bigger tussle of getting their men nominated as candidates.

Last fortnight's developments revealed once again that factionalism within the organisation has almost reached a point of no return. Admitted Mukherjee: "The bitterness has assumed far too serious proportions and the coming days will see even uglier developments."

For this, he blames Delhi and "its manner of doing things arbitrarily without taking into consultation the forces which matter in state politics". But at the same time it is equally obvious that dirty linen is being washed in public. Said a disillusioned senior Congress(I) leader: "This is nothing new. For the past one hundred years the Congress has always been ridden with factionalism. If the current methods of protest are new it is only because times have changed." The only question that remains is: how long can the show go on?

—SUMANTA SEN

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

Back To The Wall

Why should not the Congress(I) high command tolerate a few non-Congress(I) governments? Is it a Mughal empire in which nobody should have a small kingdom?

—Ramakrishna Hegde, Karnataka chief minister

BATTLING for survival, a besieged Hegde, who heads the only Janata Government in the country, must have felt like a recalcitrant vassal under fire from the mighty Congress(I) Mughals. In an atmosphere of Watergate intrigue and some brazen political horse-trading a defiant Hegde repulsed a sustained Congress(I) onslaught to pull down his tenderfoot government and establish its suzerainty over the southern state.

That Hegde was vulnerable to Congress(I) raids was clearly evident. In a month dominated by bizarre political developments three independent Karnataka Legislative Assembly members, who initially supported the Janata Government, joined the Congress(I) party and a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member defected to the Karnataka Kranti Ranga (KKR) led by the maverick S. Bangarappa who has joined forces with the Congress(I) again. The defections shook the minority government formed 11 months ago with support from members of four 'friendly' parties and 14 independent assembly members giving it a vulnerable majority of 133 in the 225-member lower house.

But just when the Congress(I) seemed to be making lethal inroads Hegde played his ace: he got C. Byre Gowda, independent MLA—and the Hegde-appointed chairman of the Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board—to record on an office dictaphone an alleged conversation with Veerappa Moily, the Congress(I) leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, in which Moily is said to have offered Gowda Rs 2 lakh to defect and named other defecting MLA's including four ministers in Hegde's Cabinet. The "Moily tapes" blew the lid off Congress(I) plans to topple the Government. It sent shock waves throughout the country and opposition leaders staged an angry walk-out in Parliament. Said bearded Janata Party President Chandra Shekhar: "There can't be anything more sordid than this. More disturbing is the silence of the prime minister."

Failed Strategy: Although Moily accused Hegde of "concocting" the tapes and wanted a Supreme Court inquiry which was refused by the Union Law Ministry, the tape

exposure was a severe blow to the Congress(I) strategy for it sent potential defectors scurrying into hiding. In an unprecedented press conference, nine ministers in Hegde's Government, including three of the four implicated in the Moily tapes, reaffirmed their loyalty to the chief minister. The Congress(I)'s calculations of a domino effect that was to result from the earlier four defections boomeranged. Vasant Bangera, the BJP MLA who had defected to the KKR, returned to his party with the incredible claim that he had been "mesmerised" by Bangarappa.

Meanwhile Hutchmasti Gowda, the

balance—the Moily tapes being what Subbiah, an opposition leader, calls an oxygen tent for the ministry". The Congress(I) was not chary of hiding its intentions and C.M. Stephen, All India Congress Committee(I) (AICC-I) general secretary, boldly proclaimed: "We are after blood and we can exercise the right to approach every non-Janata MLA and ask him to come out of the Government. If he is thinking of continuing in power we will take that he would have sleepless nights and the sword of Damocles will be hanging over his head."



powerful independent MLA who had declared his intention to join the Congress(I), was heckled by a 2,000-strong mob in Chikmagalur, which made him wear bangles and presented him with a sari. Gowda later alleged that the mob had tried to kill him and filed criminal charges against local MLA Narayana Gowda for instigating it. Fearing similar retribution two other independent MLA's, G.F. Upnal and Father Jacob, who were said to have joined the Congress(I) with Hutchmasti Gowda, hastily refuted that they had withdrawn their support to the Janata Government. Hegde asserted: "The Congress(I) will not succeed in their topple bid. The people will not allow them."

But having tasted blood the Congress(I) is unlikely to go slow on its toppling bid and the fate of Hegde's minority hangs in the

All eyes are now riveted on the result of the civic elections in six districts to be held on December 4 which will either hasten or delay the process of destabilisation that the Congress(I) has set in motion and is determined to see through to its logical end. But for the Congress(I) heavyweight Buta Singh, who has been successful in his attempts to topple Hegde's Government ever since he came into existence in January last, the election results are already sealed. Denying any involvement in the matter, he said: "Hegde has already lost the majority in the house. It is only a matter of time before the Janata's minority support will be exposed."

Defection Moves: Forming an alliance with defector help is a game that Congress(I) has honed to perfection in Karnataka. Only three years ago the late Gundu Rao, starting with 47 MLA's

ned a government with the help of defectors and by the end of his tenure had built up an outstanding majority of 185 MLA's. The party's latest attempt in Karnataka has however, a larger objective. Confessed a Congress(I) leader: "It's for the Parliament elections that all this is being done. We don't want a Janata government in Karnataka when we go to the polls."

The Congress(I), with the three southern states, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, slipping gradually from its grip, wanted to regain control of at least one of these states before it called the Lok Sabha polls. In Karnataka where right now it has 27 of the 28 Lok Sabha seats it was keen on retaining its strength. But Hegde was proving to be too much of a nuisance who had to be taken care of before the polls.

Speculation that Mrs Gandhi was

tained very stoutly that Operation Topple was conceived of as a way of preventing further exodus of their MLA's after the Janata Party weaned four of them—N.G. Naik, Devendrappa Ghallappa, K.P. Shantamurthy and N.G. Chennappa—away from the party. But with Central leaders backing the topple move this seemed to be only a smoke-screen designed to cover their real intentions. The elaborate way it was planned and the involvement of every state leader gave credence to the belief that the Congress(I) high command had other things up its sleeve than just clinging on to its flock. Abdul Nazir Sab, rural development minister, observed wryly: "I don't see why they should bother hiding their intentions in the first place."

But the Congress(I) was on firmer ground when it accused Hegde of starting the defection scramble first. With Bangarappa

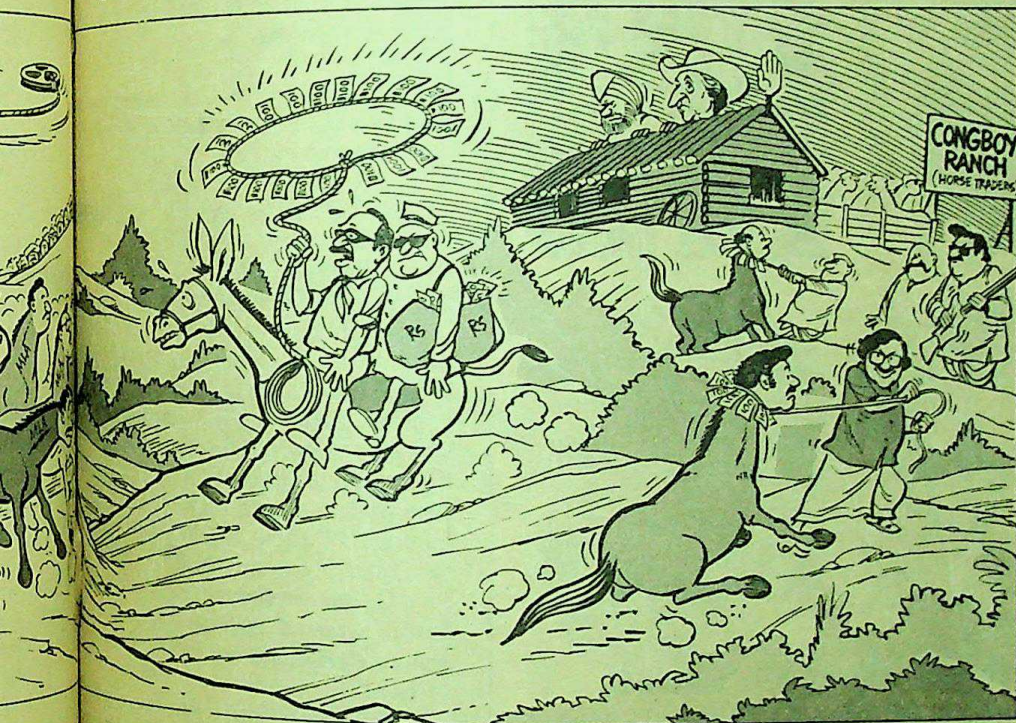
ing. But when Hegde started robbing our house he should have expected that we would not sit quietly. It became a question of our survival." It also gave the Congress(I) high command a convenient excuse to order its state leaders to topple the Government.

THE CONGRESS(I) was helped in its bid by some unhealthy scrapping within the Janata Party, especially among Cabinet ministers, which Hegde brushes aside as "minor differences of opinion". Labour Minister Azeez Sait, one of the four ministers named in the Moily tapes, has been very vocal about the Janata's unhelpful attitude towards minorities. He even threatened to quit if Hegde did not modify his chauvinist stand on the delicate language tussle over the supremacy of Kannada in the state.

With the Janata Party being dominated by the two major communities of the state the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats, who amount to 61 of the 96 Janata members, the criticism about neglect towards minorities and backward classes struck a sore point and it was exploited by the Congress(I). In fact the January assembly elections saw the return of these two communities in unprecedented numbers—115 out of a house of 225—undoing 11 years of work done by Devraj Urs to break their domination by promoting the backward classes and minorities. This time round the scheduled castes have only two men in the ministry, though they have 18 MLA's in comparison with the eight members from the two upper castes.

Hegde was also having problems with the two major communities who were bickering constantly. The ambitious H.D. Deva Gowda, public works minister who belongs to the Vokkaliga community, had emerged as number two in the Cabinet after masterminding Hegde's convincing Kanakapura by-election victory last May. To clip his wings Hegde propped up Jeevaraj Alva, minister of state for youth services, and a Vokkaliga against him. Gowda, who hobbles with Congress(I) leaders as though they are his own partymen, was naturally piqued and voiced his dissatisfaction among his friends.

The state Janata party too was fraying at the edges. The 26 KKR members who had joined the Janata Party before the Government was formed grumbled that their supporters were being ignored in party circles. This was because Janata Party members are still unhappy with Hegde for giving the former KKR members so much representation in the ministry. Of the 26 former KKR members eight have been appointed cabinet ministers and two as ministers of state against eight cabinet ministers and six minis-



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Initially Congress(I) members main-

sailing away with five MLA's immediately after he formed the Government Hegde found his already wafer-thin majority in the Assembly crumbling and was keen on boosting his strength. One way was to make 12 of the 14 independent MLA's supporting him associate members of the Janata Party in April. Five of them—H.K. Mallappa, B.S. Basavana Gowda, G.F. Upnal, C. Byre Gowda and Chigeri Gowda—were made chairmen of boards and corporations to keep them happy. The other was wooing disgruntled Congress(I) MLA's into the party and in fact state Janata Party President D. Manjunatha announced that the doors were open for interested MLA's.

Asserts Moily: "We were never bothered about the Janata Government though it was in the minority right from the beginn-

sters of state from the 62 Janata MLA's. The lack of cohesiveness in the party machinery became glaringly apparent when the Janata failed to carry out a counter-propaganda campaign at the district level against the rumours spread by the Congress(I) about the defectors. The Government had other chinks. The 14 independents who professed to support Hegde's Government were restless and while Hegde kept five of them happy by making them chairmen of various boards and corporations he could not dole out posts for each of them as otherwise he would have been severely criticised. Observed a Janata Party leader: "With all these drawbacks it is a wonder that we are still ruling the state after the Congress(I) toppling moves."

Deciding to exploit the situation before Hegde got a complete grip on his party the Congress(I) high command prepared a 'hit list' of 34 potential defectors in September belonging to the Janata Party, the BJP and the independents. The controversial S. Bangarappa was roped in for two reasons: he had an image as a backward class leader which the Congress(I) needed and also apart from the five MLA's in his party Bangarappa promised to rope in nine more.

K.H. Patil, the fiery Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (KPCC-I) president, was placed in charge of operations in the state supervised by Union ministers Buta Singh and S.M. Krishna at the Central level. The responsibility of bringing in defectors was divided among state leaders. According to party sources the final break-up was S. Bangarappa nine, Gundu Rao three, S.M. Krishna three, K.H. Patil three, Moily four, B.M. Patil, an influential MLA, two and H.C. Srikantiah, a former minister in Rao's cabinet, three.

Each of them were asked to get the signature of the defecting MLA on three papers: one stating that they were withdrawing support from the Janata Government, another saying that they had joined the Congress(I) party and a third a letter to be released to the press containing this information. The Congress(I) also counted on the support of the five Maharashtra Ekkikaran Samithi (MES) MLA's and the lone AIADMK member, all of whom are now backing Hegde. All this was calculated to boost its present strength of 81 in the legislature to around 115, which is two more than required

to form the Government.

The Congress(I) tried all the tricks in its bag to woo defectors, cash, of course, being the main inducement. Even before the Moily tapes were exposed when the assembly session was on last September six MLA's stood up and announced on the floor of the house much to the Congress(I) party's embarrassment, that they had been offered sums varying from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 25 lakh to defect. Accused Hegde: "Over Rs 3 crore was sent from Delhi to engineer defections. Local leaders are only carrying out the orders given to them by their bosses at the Centre."

Where money failed to work pressure



(Clockwise from top left) Buta Singh, Krishna, Nanje Gowda and Gundu Rao: calculated moves

was brought to bear on the MLA's either by stirring up caste and communal feelings or through old friendships. Bangera, the BJP MLA who claimed to have been hypnotised by Bangarappa, belongs to the same caste, Ediga, as the KKR leader and pressure was exercised through the community leaders. Social Welfare Minister Chandra Prabha Urs, daughter of the late Devraj Urs, was to be pressurised by her mother Chickamani who was a good friend of Nirmala Deshpande, a close associate of Mrs Gandhi. J. Ramesh the young minister of state for home, was to be roped in by his mentor B.M. Patil who hails from Bijapur, his home district. Food Minister G. Basavanappa was to be lured into the Congress(I) lair with the lollipop of a better cabinet post.

INTERVIEW

"I don't see any threat"

IN SPITE of the obvious pressure on him, Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde exudes a sense of confidence. A smile is never far from his lips, and even as he battles the Congress onslaught on his ministry, he finds time to talk to newsmen. In the midst of a busy schedule last fortnight, which took him to New Delhi where he offered what he said was evidence of the Congress(I)'s attempt to buy an MLA's loyalty, he spoke to Principal Correspondent PRABHU CHAWLA and Bangalore Correspondent RAJ CHENGAPPA about the challenge he is facing. Excerpts:

Q. Do you feel threatened by Congress(I)'s repeated attempts to topple your government?

A. I think they have exhausted their weapons. Even by offering Rs 50 lakh each MLA, they have not succeeded in their objective. Their failure is directly linked with the massive people's support behind my government. Congress cannot remain out of power. When they are not ruling they feel suffocated and are not comfortable. They thought that my government would fall within a few months, then extended its tenure by a few months. And by last month they claimed it was a question of a few days before I was toppled. I don't see any threat from them.

Q. But the Congress(I) accuses you of having started defections because the Janata Party does not have a majority of its own?

A. How on earth can this charge be made against me? They say that Kranti Ranga members are defecting. How can they be defectors when they are on the Janata symbol and participated in a meeting which elected me leader of the Janata Legislature Party (JLP)? All the independents agreed to support me and (said) they would become associate members of the party before I submitted a letter to the governor. Is this defection? Why should I encourage defections? It is not necessary for me as long as I have a comfortable majority consisting of friendly parties. In fact, I like this situation, it keeps us always on our toes and makes us sensitive to public reaction. It reminds us constantly that we should not commit any mistakes. We should before we act.

Q. But what about the Congress(I)...

MLA's joining your party?

A. Shantamurthy was a Janata Party leader earlier. He applied for our party's ticket which was denied to him because of the local factors. Then he was successful in securing the Congress(I)'s ticket. He wanted to come back so he was taken in. Another MLA Chennappa has left the Congress(I) but he has not been admitted into the JLP. But why should I encourage defection? I have a comfortable majority in the house.

Q. The Congress(I) leaders also justify defection on the plea that most of the Janata MLA's were previously with them

that these major communities have unprecedented numbers. We cannot wish them away. But it is not true to say that they are trying to dominate because they are also aware that unless they take all communities like minorities and backward classes into confidence and not only do justice but also appear to be doing justice our party will not sustain its support.

Q. Don't you agree that the minority character of your government makes it difficult to provide a clean and efficient administration?

A. In fact it is a blessing in disguise

by crook. I could have understood the toppling bid if all states were being ruled by opposition parties and Mrs Gandhi's government at the Centre was in danger. But the entire country is under her roof.

Q. Isn't the Government opposed by the friendly parties also?

A. They are with me. Maybe they are opposing my government due to political compulsions. Otherwise there would not be differences between the Janata and other opposition parties. My government is safe because the ordinary person on the roadside is praying for its survival. He has noticed the difference. They will not allow them to topple me.

Q. The Moily tapes reveal that many of your ministers were planning to defect with other partymen.

A. This is only a whispering campaign. They are experts in this kind of vicious propaganda. They floated rumours that so-and-so ministers were joining. They brought tremendous pressure on the members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. We do not have any internal squabbles. The kind of unity I see in my party is not there in the Congress(I) Legislature Party. When Mrs Gandhi says something, that becomes the law and the Bible whether it is right or wrong. In our party everybody has his own views. It is not a quarrel or a fight.

Q. What do you feel about running this government after being chief minister for the past 11 months?

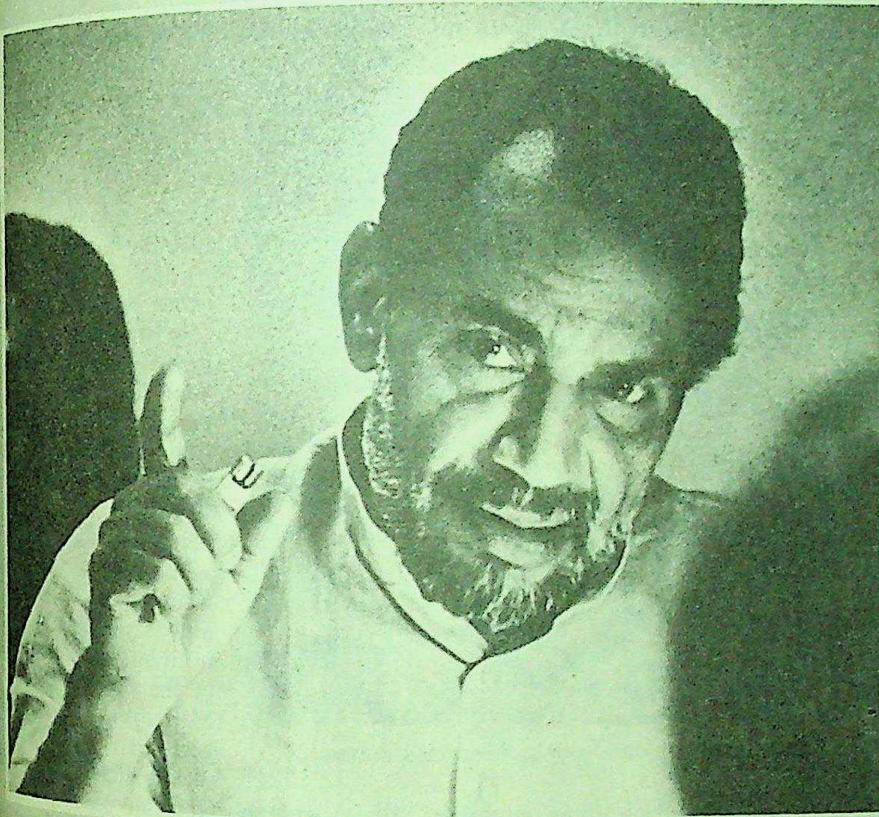
A. Personally I have very often felt that I should not have accepted this responsibility. I am not so young to take this much strain day after day. I have really been working hard with no rest. But I don't regret it although many a time I felt it would have been better if there was someone else.

Q. Your critics say that your performance has been more spectacular than concrete?

A. On the contrary it has been more concrete than spectacular. In fact the major achievement of this Government is that its performance has increased the confidence of a much larger section of the people than in January 1983. Power has been given to us by the people and we are holding it as trustees.

Q. You are hardly the cool chief minister we saw months ago. Now your temper is easily ruffled.

A. These are because number one—strain. Number two—even tolerance has its limits to nonsense. You cannot take nonsense beyond a certain limit. I would never commit aggression but if somebody hits me below the belt I would not spare that person.



Chief Minister Hegde: "This situation keeps us on our toes"

and they joined Kranti Ranga or Janata because they were not given tickets by Gundu Rao. If these MLA's go back to the Congress(I), why should you object?

A. But they are buying them over. That is not the way in any democracy. If MLA's are not satisfied and leave me I can understand that but if Congress(I) organises an auction through naked exhibition of money power, it should be opposed.

Q. Is it true that you are facing a lot of difficulties in the JLP because it is dominated by two major communities like the Lingayats and Vokkaligas and lower caste

A. It is a fact today that this was the election result. It was an accidental conspiracy of circumstances. It is true

for me because this situation keeps us on our toes. It makes us very sensitive to popular reaction. Because of this lack of majority we do not become arrogant and irresponsible.

Q. But doesn't that makes your government vulnerable?

A. That is not true. All those who are supporting me are not likely to support the Congress(I) because they have won due to an anti-Congress(I) wave in the state. The only threat is from the Congress(I). I don't understand why the Congress(I) high command can't tolerate a few non-Congress(I) governments in India. Is it a Mughal Empire in which no other rule can be allowed? Wherever there are non-Congress(I) governments, they are trying to topple them by hook or

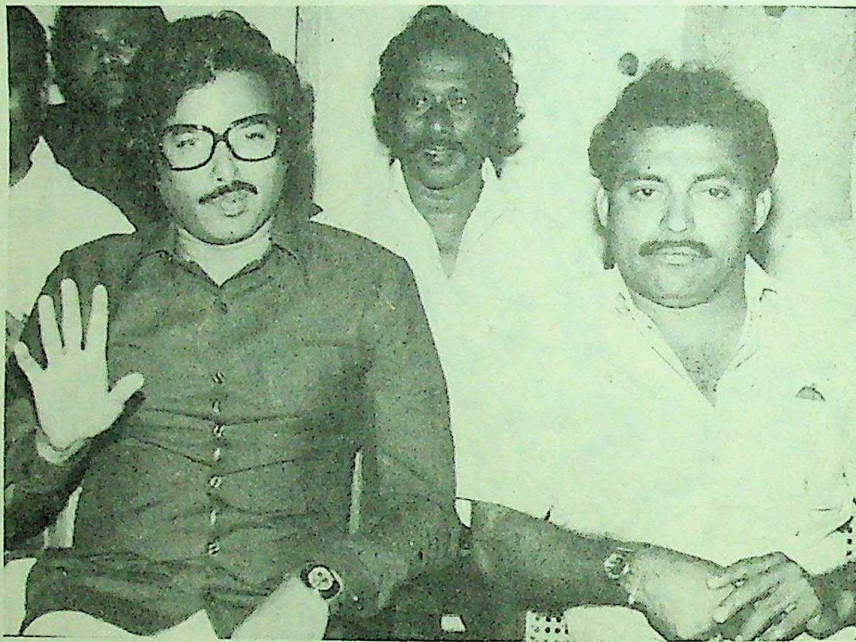
If the efforts of the Congress(I) did not succeed it has only itself to blame. The state leaders in charge of Operation Topple fought like vultures and the cacophony that resulted was picked up by Hegde. He then devised the clever technique of taping conversations between Congress(I) leaders and would-be defectors to tune the rest of the public into the goings-on in the state. By giving equal importance to the state leaders the Congress(I) thought that it would be able to resolve their differences. But instead it seemed only to aggravate them. The result was that everybody was trying to prove his importance by madly scrambling to rope in defectors resulting in Hegde immediately getting wind of the toppling moves.

While the Central leadership wanted the whole operation to be done without too much publicity H.N. Nanje Gowda, a Congress(I) MP, first jumped the gun by openly announcing a deadline by when the Government would be toppled. Then Hegde trapped Puttadas, a KPCC(I) general secretary, by taping his alleged conversation with Yelahanka MLA V. Srinivasan in which he asked him to defect. In his eagerness to prove his influence Moily fell easily into Hegde's trap. Congress(I) sources say that Byre Gowda was to come anyway to the party because his close relative Chowdha Reddy, a Congress(I) MLA, had already talked him into it. Moily need not have tried grabbing Gowda, burning his fingers badly as a result and his party's chances for the moment.

Leadership Squabbles: The bungling by the local Congress(I) leaders brought to the forefront the inherent differences between them and has allowed the Janata Party to fight back with a lot more confidence. Even if the Congress(I) does succeed in uprooting the Government it will still have a hard time deciding the chief minister. Gundu Rao is keeping out of the race but as long as the Centre listens to him he will do everything to keep Moily out of the reckoning; anyway, Moily is already out after the tapes affair. Bangarappa is a strong contender for the post but there are many in the Congress(I) who dislike him. Of course, if he is not made chief minister this time—he was thwarted in his effort to become chief minister instead of Hegde—he may have no qualms about pulling out his MLA's and waiting for another chance. H.C. Srikantiah, the king of defectors, is also making his bid.

At the Central level, Union ministers S. Shankaranand, C. Jaffer Sharief, S.M. Krishna and Veerendra Patil are jockeying for the post and cancel each other out. Out of this imbroglia K.H. Patil, the portly KPCC(I) chief, has emerged as the strongest contender, his only defect being that he had a brief honeymoon with the Brahmananda Reddy Congress before he returned to Mrs Gandhi fold. As a local Congress(I) leader said: "We are no longer talking about toppling the Government. That's done already. Right now we are not acting because we haven't sorted out the leadership issue as yet."

Realising that the threat was still real Hegde has been busy last fortnight gathering his forces. Unable to match Congress (I) money power he decided to cut down his jaunts outside the state and do some touring



Bangarappa(left) with Bangera : carefully orchestrated moves

in his home base. He set off on an extensive tour of north Karnataka, a Congress(I) bastion, where he replayed the famous Moily tapes in every public meeting he addressed. Hegde kept telling those who attended the meetings that the fate of his government lay in their hands. In Bijapur he said: "My government is your child. No one can shake us as long as we have your blessings."

Winning Support: Hegde's strategy was clear. If he could incite the public to protest against defectors then those who planned to switch alliances would freeze in their tracks. The demonstrations against Hutchmasti Gowda and Bangera are examples of how effective this technique could be. Hegde decided to win national support too. The nine-party United Front, of which his party is a major constituent, had its executive meeting in Bangalore last fortnight where it resolved to launch a nation-wide movement to compel the ruling party to give up its dange-

rous course of toppling non-Cong governments.

Meanwhile, the chief minister himself in setting his house in order. He has asked his cabinet ministers to settle their differences. Said Information Minister M. Raju: "Everyone has been made aware of the crisis. We know if we quarrel any more the government will collapse. All our differences have been sorted out."

Hegde's last resort is appealing to the people to prevent defections. Although he would like to dissolve the Assembly and call for a fresh poll it is doubtful whether he will. Banerjee would yield to his request. Banerjee is already piqued with Hegde over his white paper presented to the Assembly in which he called all governors "glorified servants" and when 52 Congress(I) and

MLA's protested in the Assembly they were suspended and the session adjourned. According to Janata sources, Hegde had planned to dissolve the house but being certain of support from other parties and even from his own MLA's he dropped the idea. In fact, at the end of September, when the tapes recording conversations in which the Congress(I) was alleged to have sides were exposed, Hegde, fearing a loss of major support, adjourned the Assembly a week ahead of schedule and is unlikely to return until he feels more confident of the support of his party. Moreover the Congress(I) has keen to rule in Karnataka rather than impose the

President's Rule so that it can re-establish its credibility in the state and it is doubtful whether they would like Banerjee to dissolve the Assembly.

IF THE Janata Government is still in power it is largely because of the skillful handling of the chief minister, a former fighter that Hegde is and his personal charisma which even his partymen cannot resist. Hegde has mellowed considerably from the playboy image that he had when he was finance minister of the state more than a decade ago. Gone is the arrogant image. In his place he cleverly installed an image of simplicity and warmth that has appealed to his partymen and the public.

As soon as he took over as chief minister Hegde dispensed with the siren in his car and preferred to be driven around in an ordinary Indian car in stark comparison to the Mercedes Benz which Gundu Rao preferred to drive around town. He refused to

M. VEERAPPA MOILY

"I'm not guilty"

MOODABIDRI Veerappa Moily, the moustached 42-year-old Congress(I) leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, is hoping right now that public memory will be as short as it is generally made out to be. He, for one, would certainly like to forget all about the sensational events of the past month, the high-point of which came when C. Byre Gowda, an independent member of the Assembly accused Moily of giving him Rs 2 lakh to defect to the Congress(I) and produced a tape recording of an alleged conversation in which Moily made him the offer. Although Moily cried "foul" till he was hoarse in the throat, and his party high command dismissed the tapes as "fictitious", all the successes of his 14-year-old political career might not wipe the blot that the "tapes affair" has come to be for the party leader.

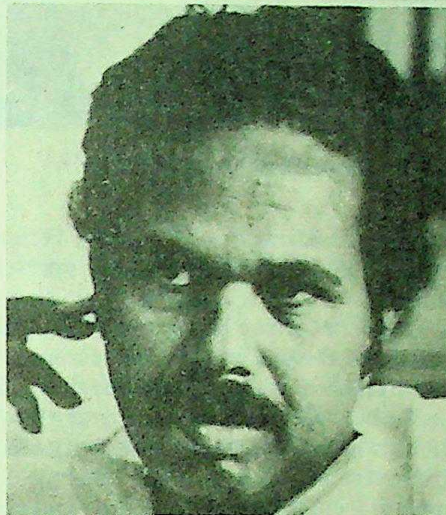
Facing the gravest crisis in his career, a visibly ruffled Moily sees a sinister plot in the accusation. Says he: "This is part of the big game played by the Janata to tarnish my image and that of the Congress party. Those tapes are concocted. I never met Byre Gowda on the day he said I met him and I have proof."

But few politicians in the state are willing to believe him, especially after C.M. Stephen, All India Congress Committee (I) (AICC-I) general secretary, unabashedly admitted that the Congress(I) was out to topple the 11-month-old Hegde Government by welcoming defectors into the fold.

Unpopular: Moily's tragedy is that he has hardly received any sympathy from his own party—something for which he himself is to blame. With the Congress(I) party teeming with factionalism, those sections which dislike Moily—and there are many in the party—have been guffawing behind his back while clicking their tongues sympathetically in public. A staunch defector in the party said gleefully: "Moily is finally in troubled waters. Let us see how he slips out of this."

Most of them are angry with Moily for falling so easily into a trap laid by Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, and consequently spoiling their chances of topping the Janata Government at the moment. K.H. Patil, the portly chief of the state Congress(I) party said snidely: "No individual can spoil the reputation of the party. He can only spoil himself." Moily has certainly taken a knock in

the eyes of his party. If the Janata Government had fallen as a result of the topple moves, and the Congress(I) formed a ministry, he would have been the hottest contender for the chief ministership. But the scandal might mean he will have to cool his heels for a while. For



Moily: crying "foul"



Byre Gowda: sensational allegations

Moily, who was careful not to have his name tarnished even when he was finance minister in Gundu Rao's Cabinet, this comes as a nasty blow to his rapid rise in politics.

Community Leadership: Born in Moodabidri in coastal Dakshina Kannada district, Moily belongs to the backward community of Devadigas or horn-blowers. The youngest of seven children Moily graduated in arts from Mangalore and came to Bangalore to study law. In college he became a prolific

writer in Kannada; something he still does while wading through politics. He has already published two novels, both being made into films, with one being directed by Girish Karnad.

After law, Moily headed back to Karkala, the taluk headquarters close to his village, and practised law for a year before he got involved in politics just after the great Congress split in 1969. He joined Mrs Indira Gandhi's Congress(R) and became a block Congress committee president and by 1972 got himself elected member of the Legislative Assembly.

Karnataka politics was dominated at that time by the two major communities: the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats, and the then chief minister Devraj Urs, who belonged to a minority Urs community, was keen on breaking their domination by encouraging the backward classes and minorities.

Shrewd Calculations: As he belonged to a backward community, Moily was immediately picked up and was first made chairman of the privileges committee and then inducted into the ministry as minister of state for small scale industries. When Urs broke away from the Congress(I), Moily played his cards right and stuck on with Mrs Gandhi. His calculations proved correct, for within two years, in 1980, Urs was forced to resign after the Congress(U) was routed in the Lok Sabha elections.

Subsequently, Moily, who was then-controlling the powerful post of general secretary of the pradesh Congress committee was made finance minister by Gundu Rao, and when Bangarappa parted ways with Rao he moved up to the number two position in Rao's Cabinet.

Moily had so far managed to remain non-controversial in the party, making friends in high places, like Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee. When Gundu Rao fell from grace after the party's ignominious defeat in the assembly election last January, Moily emerged on top of the state Congress(I) party, winning the coveted leadership of its legislature party.

Detractors do exist amongst his party colleagues in the state, but Moily dismisses any criticism from them, with the explanation that this is only because he belongs to a backward caste, and the forward communities do not want him to come up. And the unfazed playwright-turned-politician is still cocksure about his chances, despite the whole tapes affair. Says he: "Why should I care? I'm not guilty, and the high command knows it."

RAJ CHENGAPPA

the state helicopter except in emergencies and made himself so accessible to the people that in the first few months he devoted at least three hours every day to meeting people outside his office and giving them a sympathetic hearing. Even the troublesome Azeez Sait said admiringly: "Hegde is a gentleman first, then a chief minister."

Hegde is well liked by his cabinet ministers too; they praise him for giving them full freedom to run their ministries without interference. In Cabinet meetings he is always busy balancing the various forces and Nazir Sab observed: "Right now he is the fittest leader to head the Government in this fluid political situation." But Hegde's folly is his inability to take quick decisions because he has to balance so many forces and factions within and without his party. Much of his problems are also because of his easy-going nature. Said Sait: "I am yet to see a man like Urs who can rise and act and use force if necessary. Hegde is too soft a gentleman."

Inherent Obstacles: But Hegde is not to blame entirely for softpedalling issues. Indecision is an inherent defect of a minority government that is desperately trying to please everyone but on many occasions pleasing no one and Hegde's government is no exception. Even while forming his Cabinet Hegde had to sacrifice experience and ability



Azeez Sait: vocal criticism

for such considerations as keeping various factions happy by giving each representation.

When he formed his ministry consisting of 16 Cabinet ministers and eight ministers of state Hegde was forced to divide the spoils equally between his partymen and the 32 KKR men who joined the Janata Party when the Government was formed. Except for appointing chairmen for 18 boards and corporations Hegde has been unable to expand his team so far because he has not yet been

able to appease all sections. As administrative work is being seriously hampered. Said a senior Karnataka bureaucrat: "Hegde is caught between the devil and the deep sea. He has to either expand or contract his government. He must also keep the 'friendly' parties that are supporting him in the BJP, the CPI, the CPI(M), the MES and the KKR. The BJP is finding increasingly difficult to do its main ally, the BJP which has a strong presence in the Assembly and is vital for Hegde's survival, have always complained about his performance. They were recently by the fact that Hegde failed to consult them on many issues before taking a decision."

Allied Complaints: They cite the Parishad Bill to decentralise the administration which Hegde introduced in the Assembly without checking with them first. BJP leader V.S. Acharya: "Hegde can't have the cake and eat it too." The present coalition of the BJP and the Janata Party at the national level have not helped Chandra Shekhar's frequent outbursts against the BJP have only served to exacerbate the issue. But the BJP became quite vocal with complaints and, consequently, Hegde promised to consult them on all important matters.

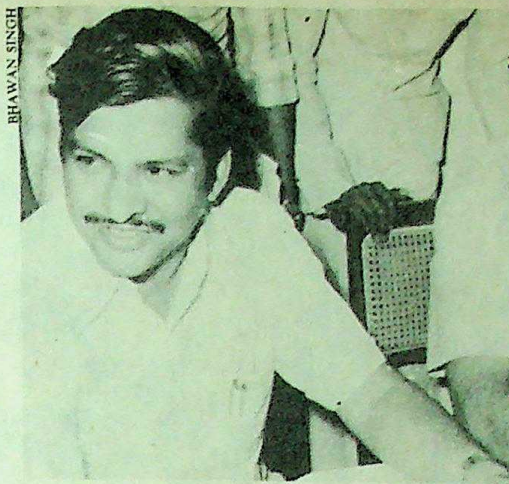


KPCC(I) delegation meets Governor Banerjee: concerted toppling strategy

But the BJP will not try and withdraw its support to the Government because they would then be accused by the Janata Party of dropping the Government and allowing the Congress(I) to form one. As Raghupathy says: "They are with us because of historical necessity and for their own benefit too."

The BJP's game of running down Hegde's Government on certain issues is also to ensure that Hegde and his Janata Party do not perform so well that its own base is eroded. The other parties supporting Hegde are also quick to realise this and both the CPI(M) and the CPI regularly criticise the Government for non-performance but in the same breath say they would not withdraw their support to the Janata Party Government. The BJP, the CPI and the CPI(M) now plan to revive their earlier attempt to launch a state-wide protest against rising prices, corruption and growing alienation of the working classes from the Government. M.S. Krishnan, CPI leader, gives the reason: "While we are opposed to the Congress(I)'s toppling game we can't close our eyes to the Janata follies."

Twin Goals: With his brittle majority Hegde has to do a lot of tight-rope walking while running the Government. He is under tremendous pressure to show performance as well as ensure that none of the parties sup-



BJP leader Acharya: waiting game

porting him are disgruntled over the measures he is adopting. Although he has had hardly 11 months to function Hegde's performance or the lack of it has come under increasing fire. When he took charge he had the twin goals of building Karnataka as a model Janata-ruled state as well as using the opportunity to revive his party's flagging fortunes at the national level. The last 11 months have seen him concentrating a bit too much on the latter by first forming a sou-

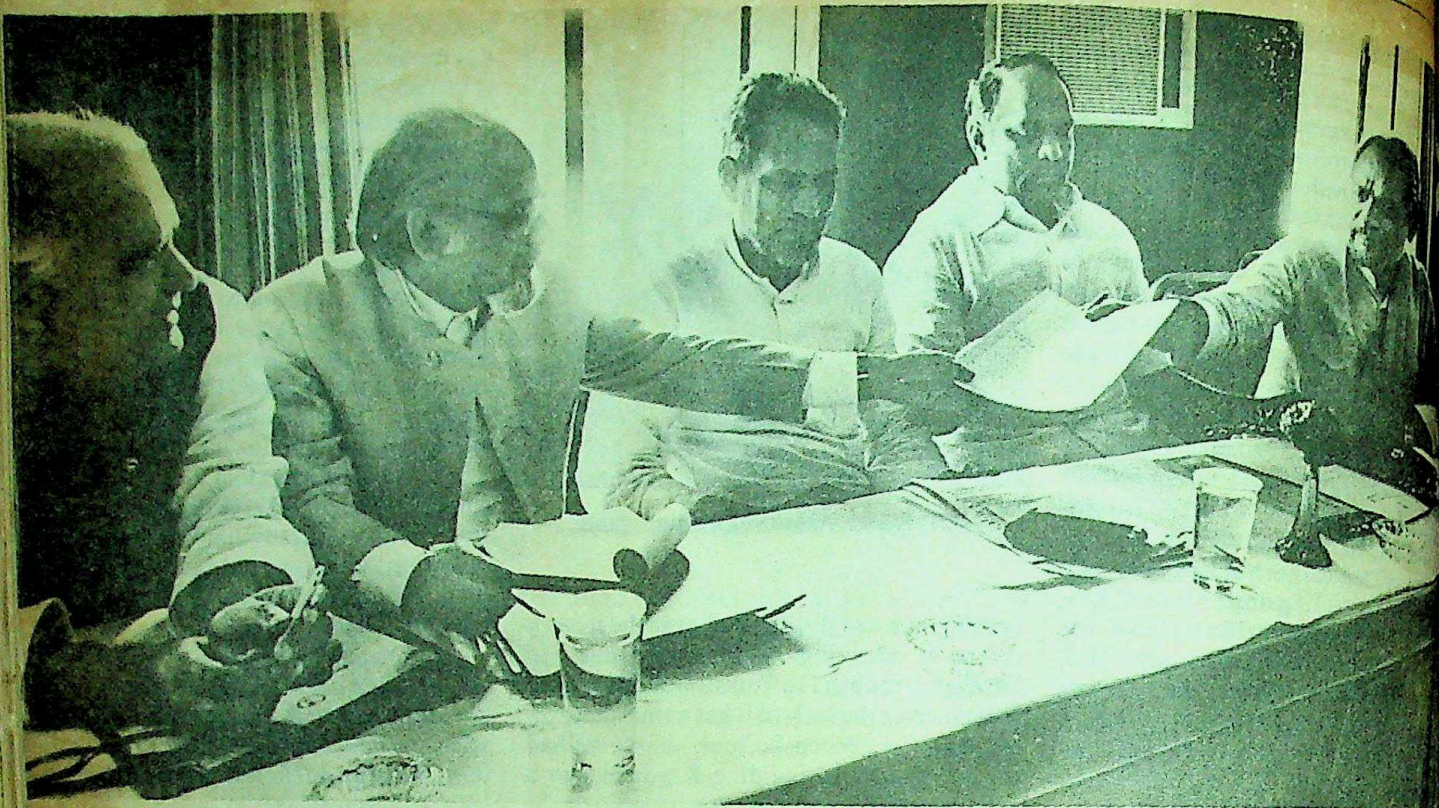
thern chief ministers' council and also setting out ambitiously to restructure Centre-state relations. Fumed K.H. Patil: "He has hardly any time to apply his mind to the state. I am at a loss to know whether he is the chief minister of Karnataka or the opposition leader of India."

On the home front Hegde's Government has made a flurry of ambitious plans which would take more than five years to fructify. To project the image of a clean government, encourage decentralisation and retain political support, the Government introduced three significant bills: the Lok Ayukta Bill, to eliminate corruption among public servants including the chief minister; the Zilla Parishad Bill to decentralise legislative and administrative power; and the Anti defection Bill to prevent political horse-trading. After months they still remain what they are—bills.

On the economic front, facing a Rs 200 crore budget deficit Hegde is severely cramped although he has announced grandiose schemes including a massive rural employment programme that is to provide jobs for a lakh people in villages in the next five years. It is a massive industrial scheme that seeks to encourage small-scale and village industries and has just taken off. Already 5,000 small scale industrial units have been set up and



Bangalore youths demonstrate against the topple bid: gaining public sympathy



From left) Chandrajit Yadav, I.K. Gujral, Chandra Shekhar, Sharad Pawar and Hegde at a United Front meeting in Bangalore: securing a

the Industries Department is clearing 100 new industries every month.

Perhaps the Janata Government's most successful scheme has been providing drinking water to 6,000 villages by sinking most 10,000 borewells at a cost of Rs 21 crore. The Government plans to provide drinking water to all 26,000 villages by March next year. While Hegde has provided concessions worth Rs 36 crore to farmers he is not been able to yield to their basic demand of wiping out their cooperative loans.

Sharp Criticism: On many key issues the government failed to take a firm stand and came in for some sharp criticism. It failed to move the obnoxious capitation fee and instead passed an ordinance allowing private medical and engineering colleges to collect fees for another five years, by which time, of course, the Government may not exist to abolish the fee. On the delicate language issue, after appeasing the agitators who are demanding supremacy for Kannada, Hegde stood on their toes when he yielded to a demand made by Sait to allow Class III and Class IV employees to attempt the selection examination without knowing Kannada. Previously it was compulsory. Now the pro-Kannada agitators, joined by matinee idol J. Kumar's fan association, plan to launch massive protest against the government later.

The common man too has been grumbling at Hegde's inability to control the price of rice. Recently he effected a rise in the price

of milk by 40 paise a litre, rice by 10 paise to 15 paise a kg, bus fare from 10 paise to 40 paise a stage and power from 5 paise to 20 paise a unit giving his detractors a stick to beat him with. Although no serious corruption charges have been proved against the Government various allegations are now trickling in and Hegde will have some answering to do. The Government is accused of showing favouritism by allotting a construction contract worth Rs 30 crore to two construction companies and awarding another controversial contract to a local brewery for arrack production which would fetch the brewer Rs 1.5 crore more annually.

The Janata Government has also been accused of transferring bureaucrats and engineers to suit the whim of its MLA's. Manik Rao Patil, a Congress(I) leader said almost mechanically: "Corruption has never been so rampant in the state. There is not a single department in which there is no corruption."

Election Victories: Hegde himself is unruffled by these charges of corruption and says scoffingly: "This is only for the sake of making an allegation. So far as this government is concerned I can say it with confidence that none of us have been bribed or taken money." The people seem to believe him, judging by the results of by-elections and civic polls held in the past 11 months. In the legislative council by-election held in March last the Janata won both the seats.

While being elected to the Assembly Hegde registered a thumping victory in the

Kanakapura by-election while the Congress(I) retained Yelburga defeating the Janata-supported BJP candidate. In the civic polls held in August the Janata took absolute control of 45 of the 166 town municipalities while the Congress(I) captured only 26. Although independents emerged as a major force taking a firm grip on 32 towns.

The Congress(I) does not have the power at the moment to go to the polls on the issue of non-performance as the Janata had hardly any time to function. Instead the Congress(I) is concentrating on thwarting Hegde's plan to incite the people against its detractors. Last week its 81 MLA's set out on a march from Chikmagalur to Bangalore to protest against the "assault" on Huttur Gowda. In doing so they wanted to show potential defectors that they were throwing the might behind them.

As a follow-up protest marches are being organised in district headquarters and the Congress(I) will carry out a ceaseless campaign to topple the Government. Says a KCC(I) chief Patil ominously: "I am interested in strengthening my party both inside the Assembly and outside. If I want to join my party I can't stop them. Until Hegde carries the people and the majority with him I am not going to discuss him but if he loses his majority he goes too. The battle lines are drawn and the Congress(I) is bent upon crushing the Janata kingdom" in its mighty albeit crumbling empire. Hegde is truly under siege.

—PRABHU CHAWLA and RAJ CHENGAPPA

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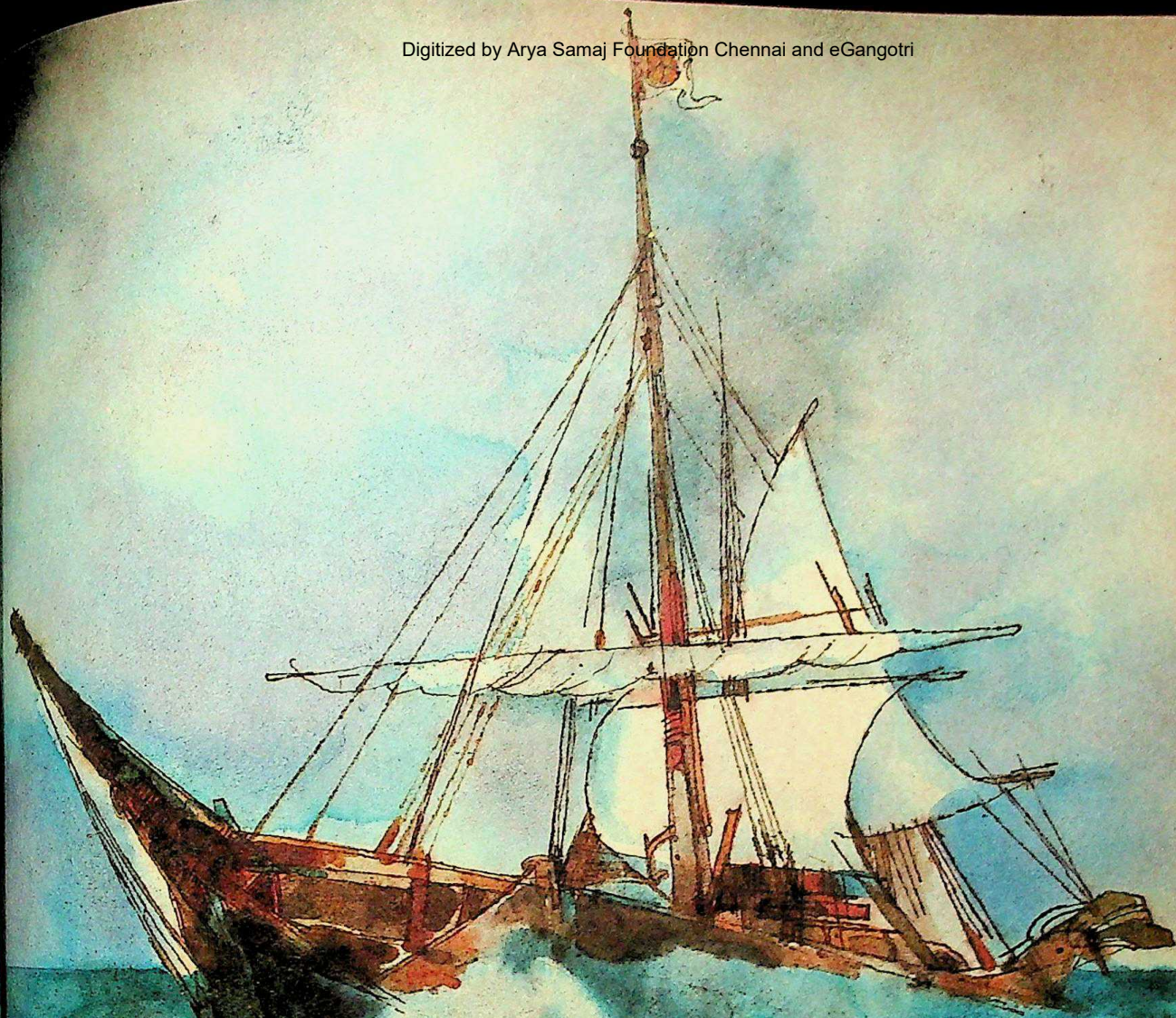
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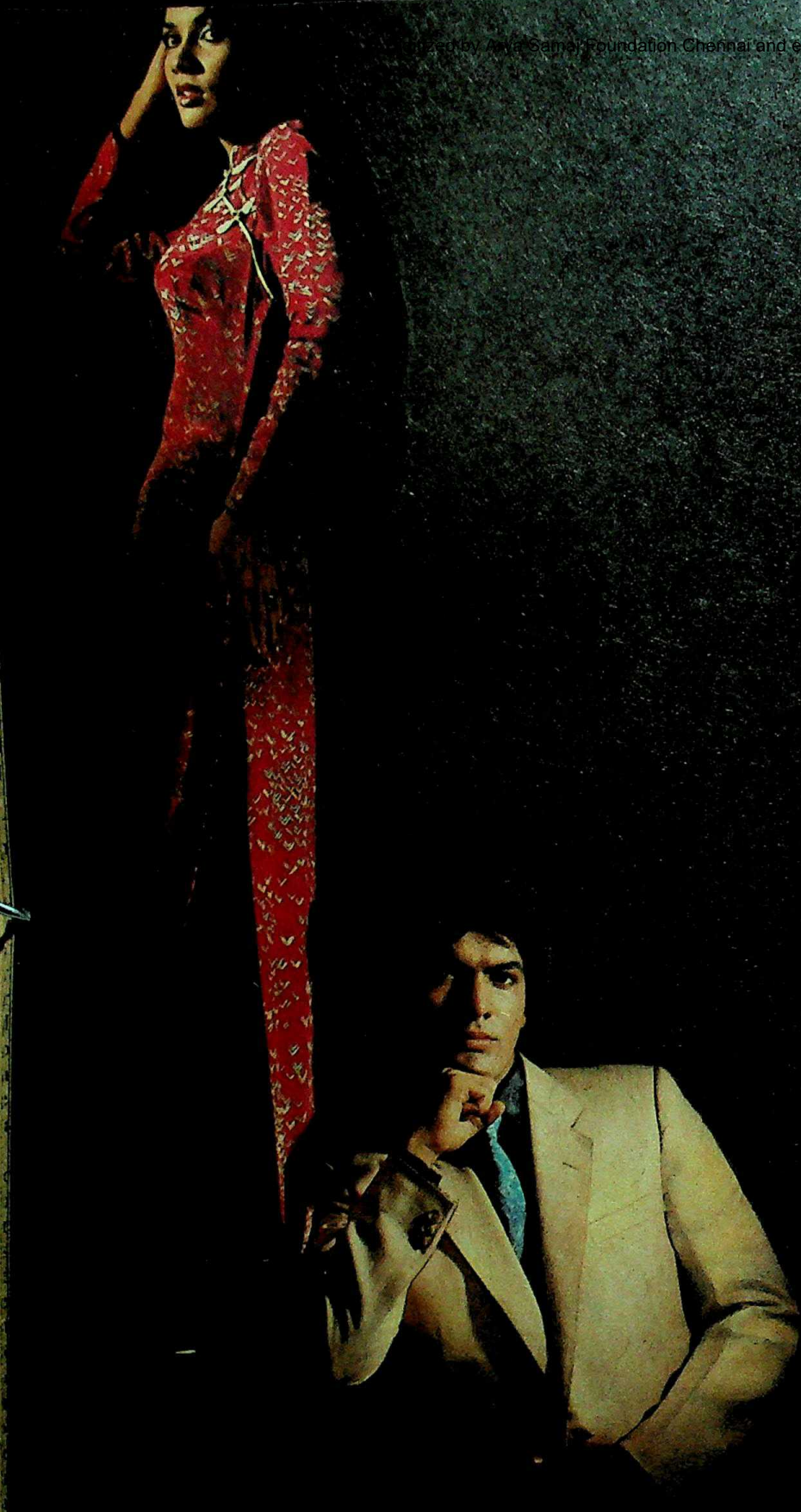
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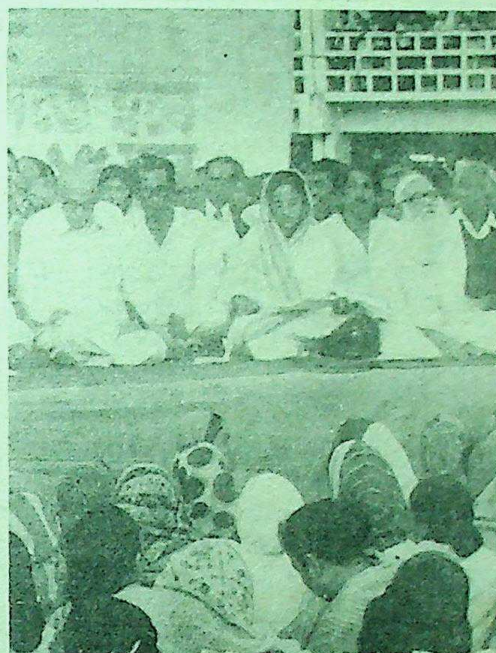
BANGLADESH

Looking For Legitimacy

MORE than anything else, military rulers always seek legitimacy. It was therefore natural that Lt-General H.M. Ershad,

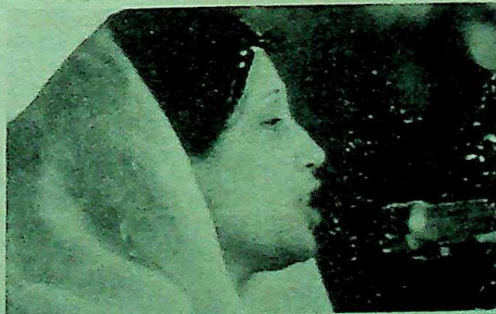
mended by his intelligence officers but from the remnants of large parties, decaying in the midst of anarchy. Rahman used politicians: Ershad hates them. And the politicians hate Ershad too.

Alienated Politicians: Or else there could not have been such unanimity among



The 15-party alliance meeting in Dhaka

the warring political parties about the primary necessity to end Ershad's rule. In one strident chorus, politicians who would have been happy to strangle each other till the other day are now demanding the end of army rule. Such groups are: the 15-party anti-West (and subtly pro-India) alliance led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed of the Awami League; the seven-party alliance headed by Abdus Sattar, former president of Bangladesh, and leader of the BNP (though the guiding spirit of this alliance is Begum Khaleda Zia, widow of the assassinated President); and the 10-party Jatiyo Oikya Front (national unity front) led by Khandakar Moshta-



Begum Zia: prominent leader

que Ahmed, the rabidly anti-Indian and anti-Soviet chief of the Democratic League Party.

This fortnight, these political parties, representing nearly every shade of people (peasantry, bourgeoisie, trade unions, students) begin a series of demonstrations in Dhaka, as well as the country's 19 other districts, aimed at forcing Ershad to end martial law; then hold parliamentary elections first, some time in March next year and follow it up with the presidential election.

The idea is to deny Ershad the advantage of martial law, under which he detained nearly 3,000 political workers, scrapped the 1979 Constitution, and wears a halo of power around himself. The consequences of an immediate return to civilian rule are not spelt out by the political parties; but the possibility remains that the chief martial law administrator's office in that case will have to be converted into the interim presidency.

IT DOES not suit Ershad, because he can hope to manipulate the election results only with the army rule looming in the minds of the people. If rid of the army's clout, the Bangladesh polity will have no place for Ershad who had no role in the liberation struggle (he was repatriated from Pakistan as late as 1973) and is generally regarded as a smart usurper. So, Ershad has promptly taken cover behind the Constitution, scrapped by him alone, Article 72(1) of which says: "Parliament shall be summoned, prorogued and dissolved by the President...."

He recently told a meeting of college teachers in Dhaka: "Under the suspended Constitution framed by them (his opponents), presidential elections cannot follow parliamentary polls. But they demand that it should be done." The logic was obviously specious, because the Constitution was framed without the contingency of its suspension at gun-point in sight. But the announcement of the election schedule so embittered the relations between Ershad and the political parties that their leaders spurned an invitation by the CMLA to "find ways for a phased return to civilian rule."

However, if faced with the prospect of a total boycott by the political parties, Ershad can always prolong martial law indefinitely. "Nobody wishes that military rule should go on," he said, "nonetheless, there are 66 countries in the world being run by the military." But, by talking of a return to civilian rule, Ershad has released the genie from the bottle, and it may not be easy for him to push back the democratic aspirations of the people.

Strong Measures: As a matter of fact, the top brass in the army did not favour the idea of an immediate restoration of demo-

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cratic order. Ershad's two main opponents in the army on this point were Major-General Abdur Rahman, commander of the key 9th Division garrisoned in Dhaka, and Major-General Mohabbatjan Chowdhury, former chief of the military intelligence, and appointed last year as home minister. Ershad took care to silence his critics: Chowdhury was relieved of his portfolio, and Rahman was stripped of his army post before being sent away on an ambassadorial assignment. The 9th Division is the traditional eye of the storm in the Bangladesh Army.

Ershad apparently feels confident that his ploy will work. He takes helicopter rides criss-crossing the country five days every week, ostensibly to inspect programme implementation. "You have elected politicians," he tells audiences, "and politicians have always betrayed you. Now elect people who are honest and who have faith in religion." The government-controlled media project him as a deeply religious man. Early this year, he advocated introduction of Arabic as a compulsory language in the schools—a move which was thwarted by militant students in the Dhaka University with the sacrifice of 30 lives. The influential pir of Atroshi, who has an estimated 20,000 followers in the army (including Ershad), gets regular audiences with him.

Main Hope: His religious appeal, coupled with the fact that he was able to restore a semblance of order to the country's battered administration, is the main hope for him. Last year, Bangladesh registered a record food production of 15.1 million tonnes, and, at a 6 per cent agricultural growth rate, the country will be self-sufficient in food in three years, thus living down the stigmatic phrase—"international basket case"—coined by Kissinger in the wake of its liberation. The World Bank recently praised Bangladesh for the step taken by it to de-nationalise 600 industrial units, including 60 jute mills.

But economic successes are transient, if not fragile, in a country where 7 per cent of the households own 48 per cent of cultivable land and five regimes have come and gone in 12 years, punctuated by the slaying of two Presidents. Despite the record harvest last year, food prices in Dhaka have shot up 30 per cent in two months because of the disastrous floods in August-September. An egg costs the equivalent of Rs 1.50, when the per capita income is only Rs 900 (1976 prices).

Ershad belongs to a generation of army officers, trained in Quetta under the shadow of Ayub Khan, the symbol of military elitism, which believes in force as the kingpin of politics. He also belongs to a race which liberated itself from the yoke of oppressive rule wading through a holocaust. The coming months will reveal this dichotomy in still, fuller details.

—SUMIT MITRA

H.M. ERSHAD

"Martial law is a stopgap"

Lt General Hossain Mohammed Ershad, the chief martial law administrator of Bangladesh for the past 19 months, is unlike a typical military officer. Gentle and soft-spoken, the 53-year-old general appears all set to contest for his nation's presidency next May as a candidate of Jana Dal, a new political party formed last week. In New Delhi last fortnight to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, he spoke on a variety of subjects in an exclusive interview to INDIA TODAY Senior Editor S. VENKAT NARAYAN. Excerpts:

Q. You were in Washington recently. What did you discuss with President Reagan?

A. I had a fruitful discussion with Mr Reagan. He was busy coping with the crises in Beirut and Grenada. Yet he made it a point to see me and hear about our development programmes and plans to hold elections.

Q. You have said you will hold elections next year?

A. Yes. We all want democracy to return. We all want that people's rule should be established. Martial law is a stopgap arrangement for a limited period of time to put things right.

Q. There are reports that you propose to fight the elections.

A. I've been running the country for 19 months. Running a country is politics. I got myself involved in what I like to call politics of development, and not the politics of palace—which had been the trend in my country. I want politicians to realise that old-style politics is not going to help a developing nation like ours, a nation with a million problems that need to be developed from the village upwards. The head of the state has to spend most of his time in the villages among the poor who have been living in poverty for ages. If that kind of politics comes to the country, then I am ready to join it and take the reins of government.

Q. How confident are you of winning the election as a Jana Dal candidate?

A. Jana Dal is not my party. But if I go for an election.... You see, I worked very hard for the past 19 months and did everything for the poor people. Political demonstrations are only urban-based. Outside Dhaka you won't find any support for the political parties. When I took over, the growth rate was zero, last year it was 3.8 per cent. This year, too, we expect the same. Our population growth rate is

coming down. Our food production increased. We've denationalised industrial sector. Many foreign investors are showing interest to come to Bangladesh. These are all good signs.

Q. It was the late Ziaur Rahman's ambition to prove wrong Henry Kissinger's dictum that Bangladesh is a basket case. What is the position now?

A. I went to America precisely to tell them that we're no more a basket case. We don't want to be a basket case. We want to stand on our own feet. We want

"The head of state has to spend most of his time in the villages. If that kind of politics comes to the country, then I am ready to join it and take the reins of government."

"After this fence business, there's been a lot of unhappiness in the people's minds in Bangladesh. They could have at least consulted us before announcing the decision."

self-sufficient in food, industry and everything. I said to Mr Reagan that America has been kind enough to assist us for the past 12 years. We want a little more to build our infrastructure. I can tell you that we'll be self-sufficient in most things in two years' time.

Q. With 8,000 babies being born every day, yours is possibly the world's most densely populated country. What are you doing to check population growth?

A. Population growth poses a great danger to our very existence. One of the things about it is that people have not realised this danger. After taking over, I initiated a crash programme by reorganising the family planning and population control programme. We have intensi-

supervision at the grassroots level, at the village level, which wasn't the case before. Each sub-district's family planning officer has been given a target depending upon the population. At certain places, we have achieved 103 per cent results. Very often I make surprise checks by helicopter to see if anybody is faking the figures. In our parts, unless somebody is supervising, nobody will do his job. We have now introduced checking at all levels so that we know exactly what chaps are doing. Every week, we monitor information in a control room in my office in Dhaka with the help of a computer.

bours. I'm making personal efforts to live with India in peace. We should discuss each other's problems before taking major decisions that affect each other. The fence decision really came as a bolt from the blue. What we didn't like is the theory that thousands of migrants from Bangladesh are going to Assam. But India has not substantiated this. Nobody pointed it out to our missions here. When we heard that for this unsubstantiated reason, India is going to construct a fence across her border with us, we really felt very hurt. You know the public sentiment in our country on matters like this. We

been mentioned at all earlier, it all sounds so unbelievable. The situation is stable in our country. Prices have been stable over the past two years. There hasn't been much of a famine lately either. I can understand Bangladeshis going to the Gulf to earn petrodollars. But coming in large numbers to India where the situation is not all that dissimilar to ours does sound a bit hard to swallow.

Q. How would you describe your relations with India?

A. They're very good. But after this fence business, there's been a lot of unhappiness in the people's minds in Bangladesh. I too have felt very hurt. They could have at least consulted us before announcing the decision. We could have then talked to our people and told them why India wants to build the fence—for right reasons or wrong ones. But that's another thing.

Q. You'd be really happy if India dropped the idea, isn't it?

A. Personally I'd be very happy if India reconsiders this decision. Otherwise, there's likely to be a lot of misunderstanding.

Q. How are the talks on the Farakka Barrage proceeding?

A. We're still talking. We'll probably find a solution soon. We have to solve this problem.

Q. How are your relations with Pakistan?

A. Many of the Bihari Muslims who opted to go to Pakistan after the liberation war are still in Bangladesh. We told Pakistan that these people are their citizens and that they must be taken back. They took some. We don't know for sure when the next batch will go. These poor people are living in misery and they must go back to their country. Otherwise, relations with Pakistan are good.

Q. What are you doing about corruption?

A. You see it's the system that corrupts a person. What we are trying to do is to change the system. We have decentralised the administration. So any corrupt person is easily caught at the lower level. The problem is that of corruption at the higher levels. By changing several things, we have been able to reduce it at the higher levels too.

Q. You seem to believe that all army people are good and that all politicians are bad.

A. Our army is different. We fought for our independence. We sacrificed our lives for freedom. This the politicians don't understand. We have a right to say that the country is much better off with us. We are not a selfish force.



Ershad: "We're no more a basket case"

Whenever I discover some suspicious figures, I fly down to the village and cycle down to the home in question to check things out for myself. I did this at least twice and this had a salutary effect. Our target is to bring the population growth down from about 3 per cent to 1.5 per cent by 1986.

Q. You have expressed your unhappiness about India's decision to fence her border with Bangladesh. Are you cross because the Indians didn't tell you about it at all, or are you questioning India's right to do so?

A. We're good friends and neigh-

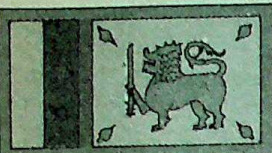
have since talked to Indian leaders about this. I'm sure Mrs Gandhi must have some compulsions to do it. But we have our own political compulsions too.

Q. Are you saying that there is no illegal immigration from Bangladesh into India at all?

A. Many Bangladeshis come to India to visit places of pilgrimage, but they all come with valid visas. We've never been informed officially by India about any illegal immigration from our country. This charge has not been proved. So we do not know. If somebody says that there are so many Bangladeshis in India and it hasn't

SRI LANKA

Guarded Optimism



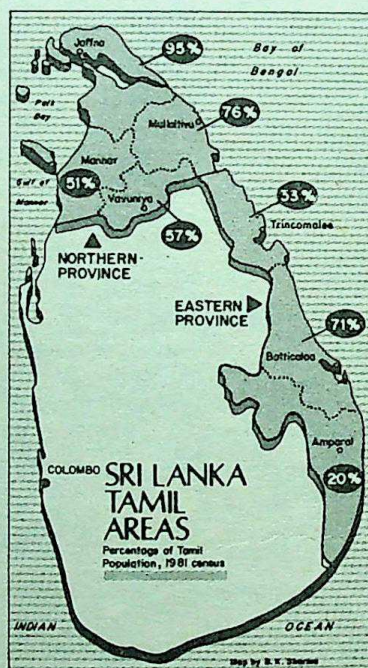
WITH the spotlight on the Commonwealth jamboree in the Indian capital, there was precious little public attention to another series of talks under way that could have far-reaching implications for the South Asian region. Till last month, there was virtually no progress on the Indian mediation effort to bring Sri Lanka's Government and its Tamil political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), to the negotiating table. Last fortnight, with Sri Lankan President Junius Richard Jayewardene and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sitting together on the issue, there seemed to be a

► The Sri Lankan President had earlier insisted that there should be a referendum before the district councils are merged into provinces. Representatives of the TULF said in Delhi that this might result in yet another ethnic bloodbath. But Jayewardene is now willing to consider dropping the idea of a referendum.

► Jayewardene is willing to consider forming provincial councils with their own legislative assemblies and ministries. But he is opposed to the idea of combining the four northern districts (Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu) and the three eastern ones (Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee) into one provincial council. This, in essence, is the greatest stumbling block to the pro-



Jayewardene with Mrs Gandhi: high-level negotiations



faint flicker of light at the end of the tunnel. This may eventually turn out to be only a mirage, but there was guarded optimism because Jayewardene is for the first time willing to concede many of the TULF's demands. And, the TULF has, on its part, softened its hard line on some of Jayewardene's conditions.

Long-awaited Breakthrough: Even though the talks were conducted under a cloak of secrecy, INDIA TODAY learns that:

► The TULF will give up its demand for a separate state of Eelam provided the Government agrees to combine the northern and eastern districts of the island into one province with a legislative assembly and a council of ministers. The province will function within a united Sri Lanka.

gress of negotiations. If there was some kind of agreement on this point, the talks would have concluded successfully.

► Jayewardene has insisted that the port of Trincomalee in the island's eastern region should be under the jurisdiction of the country's Central Government. The TULF has agreed to Trincomalee being in the control of Colombo as a kind of a union territory even after a provincial administration comes into effect.

Even though the TULF leaders are reluctant to admit it in their sulky mood, this is indeed remarkable progress. The credit for it should go to Jayewardene himself and to the diplomatic skill of Parthasarathi who has dealt with the warring Tamils and Sinhalese with a good deal of understanding and

patience. S. Thondaman, the leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and Minister for rural industrial development in the Jayewardene Government, also played a crucial role in the negotiations.

Key Contact: Being a Tamil himself, Thondaman appreciated the problems of his brethren in the northern districts. The TULF has been completely cut off from the developments in the island since last July's carnage. Being a senior trade unionist and minister, Thondaman has direct access to Jayewardene. This has helped him to get a great deal in understanding the complexity of the situation created by the riots.

For example, Parthasarathi's second visit to Colombo prior to the talks would not have come about without Thondaman. The leader of the Tamils did a bit of blunt talking to the la hawks in the Jayewardene Ministry Cabinet meeting after his return from

in October. "Men like Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake may think the July riots destroyed the Tamils as a race," said Thondaman. "But they do not realise is that the riots have also destroyed the fair name of Sri Lanka as a nation. The mood in India is definitely nasty. Mrs Gandhi, M.G. Ramachandran were straining the people in India a whole and in Tamil Nadu cause of their personal popularity. If the Indian offer of offices was nipped in the bud, the situation might slip out of the leaders' hands and there is no knowing what would happen," Thondaman had warned.

That had effectively silenced the hawks and the President soon requested the Indian Government to send Parthasarathi to resume his negotiations.

Serious Efforts: The 12-member delegation which assembled in Delhi was headed by its General Secretary Appapillai Amirthalingam, who interrupted his visit to Europe and Africa to be present in Indian capital. The team included President Murugesan Sivasithamparan, as Rajavarothian Sampanthan, Yogeswaran, Neelan Tiruchelvam and Navaratnam—all TULF MP's who lost seats in the Sri Lanka Parliament for refusing to take an oath giving up the demand for a separate state.

The Sri Lankan President has given the problem top priority by personally

the leader (CWC) and development, also... negotiations with Parthasarathi. The Indian envoy is reporting to the minister directly, thus investing the minister with the highest authority from the Tamil side.

Both Jayewardene and Mrs Gandhi expressed cautious optimism. They were fairly guarded in their comments to TODAY on the progress the talks were making. Said the Sri Lankan President: "I am hoping to talk to Mr Parthasarathi again either in Delhi or in Goa. There will be more sessions with Mr Parthasarathi. On my return to Colombo, I propose to call an all-party meeting to discuss what the TULF wants."

Vexing Problem: Mrs Gandhi told TODAY at an informal chat during a session for the Commonwealth Heads of Government last fortnight: "I am hopeful a reasonable settlement will be worked out soon. Mr Jayewardene has to put across

to the Sinhalese whatever he agrees to do for the Tamils in order to carry them with him. I hope the TULF leaders will realise and appreciate the President's problems. I am worried about having to cope with millions of Tamil refugees. Already 25,000 Tamils have come over to India since the July troubles."

Having succeeded in bringing Jayewardene and the TULF so close to a possible agreement, Parthasarathi was back at his peace-making job in his modest but relent-



Parthasarathi (left) and Thondaman: serious efforts at a settlement

less fashion late last fortnight. Both sides appreciate the gravity of the situation. The moderate TULF leadership realises the futility of a prolonged armed struggle that the extremists among the Tamils are threatening to wage. But they are confident that they can persuade their angry young men to give up their violent ways provided the Sri Lankan Government allows them to live with honour and dignity in their homeland.

Said Thondaman: "I met Uma Maheswaran, the extremist leader, during my last visit to India. He promised to give up the violent struggle if a viable alternative to Eelam is found. The President too is keen to sort this problem out for good. I hope a solution will be found soon."

Sri Lanka's Tamil problem is a creation of Jayewardene, the politician. It is now entirely up to Jayewardene, the statesman, to solve it.

—S. VENKAT NARAYAN

A. AMIRTHALINGAM

Life has become impossible"

IN AN interview with INDIA TODAY Senior Editor S. VENKAT NARAYAN, Appaillai Amirthalingam, general secretary of the Tamil United Liberation Front, explained his party's stand in the negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government. Excerpts:

Q. President Jayewardene seems to have conceded most of your demands. Why are you insisting on the northern and eastern provinces being joined together?

A. Because these areas have been the traditional homeland of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Even Bandaranaike had conceded that the northern and eastern districts be amalgamated. Our security and our territory's integrity are important for us. The Tamils were in a majority in the eastern province before World War II. For instance, in Trincomalee the Tamils comprised 54 per cent of the population at the time of Sri Lanka's independence and the Sinhalese only 4.5 per cent. Now the Sinhalese account for 35 per cent and the Tamils 33 per cent.

This has been possible because of the Government's planned colonisation of Tamil areas by Sinhalese. We cannot allow this encroachment on our territory to go on for ever. Our fear is that we may be gradually squeezed out of the eastern provinces. In times of crises, this will force us either to jump into the ocean or across the ocean.

Q. If he concedes this demand, the President may have problems in carrying



Amirthalingam: "It's up to the President"

the Sinhalese with him.

A. Frankly, there's no opposition worth the name in Sri Lanka. The opposition groups have been reduced to impotence. He is assured of staying in power for six years. The media is controlled by the Government. President Jayewardene is stronger than many people think. If he is determined to do something, it is not all that difficult for him to get it done.

Q. It may not be tough selling the idea to the Sinhalese at large. His problem appears to be convincing the hawks within his own Government.

A. It is for the President to put his own house in order. He raised certain monsters for his own use at a certain point of time. Now he must cut them to size. And I know he is capable of doing it.

Q. The President says that peace has returned to the island and that the Tamils and the Sinhalese are working together all over again.

A. I'm afraid the President is ill-informed. None of the Tamil teachers, public servants and students have returned to Sinhala areas. Of the 1,35,000 Tamils who were forced to take shelter in refugee camps, over 20,000 are still living in them. Nearly 25,000 Tamils have come away to India and another 10,000 may have gone to western and south-east Asian countries. The Tamils continue to feel terribly insecure.

Q. In case the talks fail because of your insistence on the Jaffna and Trincomalee areas being made into one province, what will you do?

A. Life for the Tamils has become impossible in the southern parts of the island too, particularly after the July riots. They are being denied opportunities of employment, holding land, doing business or running industries. Now this is happening even in the eastern districts. Therefore, we should have our territory as one unit so that we may build the economic life and also ensure the security of the lives and properties of the Tamils. If that is not assured, there can be no settlement of the ethnic problem. We will make all efforts to achieve this objective through India's good offices.

Q. What are your future plans?

A. I will go to Madras and stay there for a few days to assess the situation in my country. Of course, there's a certain element of risk involved in my returning. But it is my country and how long can I stay away from my land and my people?

PAKISTAN

Descent to Acrimony



IT ENCOMPASSES all the elements of a great Shakespearean tragedy. Two star-crossed protagonists locked in fatal embrace

while in the shadows a sinister conspiracy is played out to keep them apart. The evil uncles, the jealous suitors, the ghosts from the past are all in evidence in the symbiotic relationship between New Delhi and Islamabad, a relationship that by last fortnight appeared to have reached its lowest level since the immediate post-1971 period.

But if it was a carefully-constructed conspiracy, it was still not clear who was the villain and who the victim. For decades, the accusations and allegations of interference or provocation have flowed uninterrupted from both sides of the border and in the process stymied any periodic efforts at reconciliation. But in the last two months, they have displayed a shriller and more dangerous edge than at any time in the recent past.

Media Onslaught: The slide started last September with Mrs Gandhi's statement of support for the MRD (Movement for Restoration of Democracy) in Pakistan (INDIA TODAY, October 15) a statement that eventually, and ironically, only succeeded in buttressing Zia and his claims of covert Indian help to his opponents. The next stage was in October and, inevitably, the press played the most damaging role. On October 18, Mrs Gandhi routinely attended the inauguration of the World Sindhi Sammelan in New Delhi. With the situation in Pakistan's Sind province being what it is, the event was tailor-made for mischief. The next day, Pakistan featured prominently in a report from the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) correspondent in New Delhi which claimed that the event had been convened by "one of her (Mrs Gandhi's) party members in Parliament who has candidly expressed his feelings that the time is ripe for this part of Pakistan (Sind) to become a part of India...." For the Government-controlled press in Pakistan, that little delicacy was sensational fodder. Immediate editorial comparisons were

drawn with the 1971 situation and fears of India enacting "another Bangladesh" found free expression.

The media onslaught was an immediate signal for another bout of India-baiting. A few days later, the Government-owned *Pakistan Times* convened a symposium provocatively labelled: "Indian policy of interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring countries" at which a section of Pakistan's ruling elite took the opportunity to reel off a long list of instances of deli-



Zia and Mrs Gandhi with their foreign ministers at New Delhi last March: aggressive postures

berate interference by India in the internal affairs of Pakistan. The symposium was liberally peppered with dire warnings of Indian intentions to launch another attack on Pakistan.

Communication Gap: Though some of the instances mentioned were perfectly justified, most, as far as the Indian Government was concerned, was clear distortion, an obvious victim of the serious lack of communication not just between the two governments but among the media and the public. Almost instantly, a hardening of attitudes was discernible. The retaliation was not long in coming. In November, the famous Gilgit dinner stoked the fires once again. General Zia could hardly have been unaware of the kind of reaction a dinner in Gilgit—located in the disputed part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir—would excite in New Delhi, and

the Indian ambassador, acting from South Block, declined to attend.

What he lost out on was more than an appetising dinner. The fragility of relations crumbled dramatically, opened the floodgates for the Indian and government to return the complement. While the Indian press, with some exceptions, immediately launched its offensive, Mrs Gandhi faithfully paragon Rajiv issued statements that cleared its fingers into the Punjab pie but massing troops on the border. Mrs Gandhi's statement that "someone was looking for an excuse to attack India" left nobody in doubt as to who that "someone" was.

was politically obvious from the fact that outnumbered India, one, it would be an act of suicide for any military strategist to contemplate war and on India at this stage. Mrs Gandhi went a step further and admitted that the Government had proof of Pakistani involvement in Punjab, a charge that was quickly taken up by senior party colleagues.

BUT BY not stating anything further, what exactly was the proof was the charge much of its sting. The Foreign Ministry declined to elaborate except to say that it was revealed when the "opportunity" was further deflated when the Governor B.D. Datta told a reporter that there was no definite proof of Pakistan's involvement, a statement that he later retracted a day later.

Then, at the same time, Union Minister of State for Defence, K.P. Singh, replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, stated categorically that there was no due concentration of Pakistani troops along the border and that the exercises being conducted close to the border were carried out every year during October and November.

The contradictions were glaring and they also served to illustrate the fact that both sides were merely seeking the reasons to denigrate the other. In the context of the relationship, it is clear that Pakistan would have little hesitation in stoking the Punjab fire. By the yardstick, India would react with acrimony to keep the embers in Sind from

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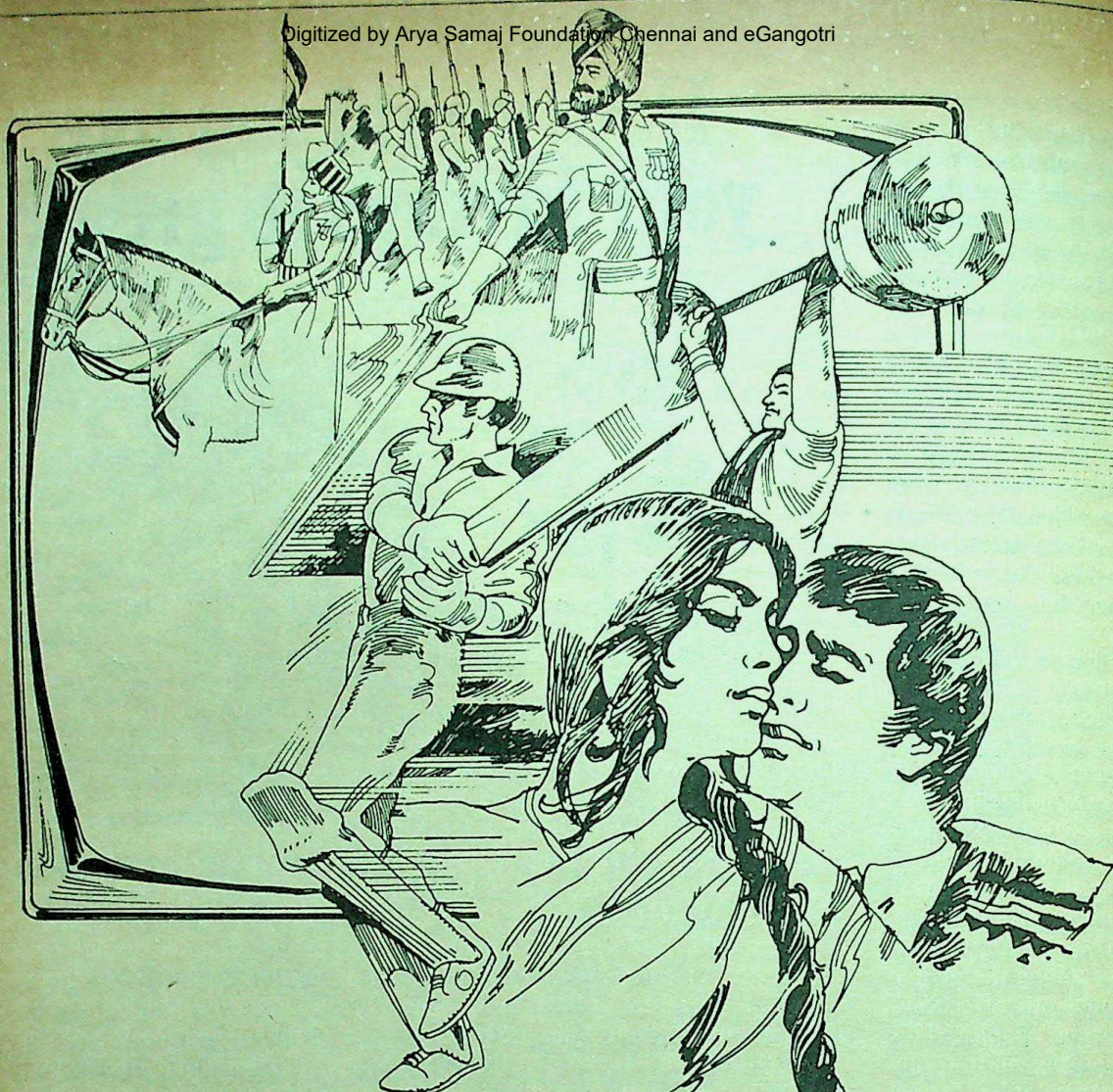
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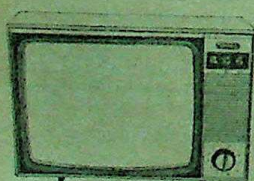
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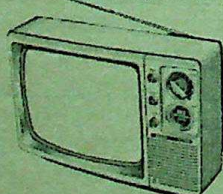
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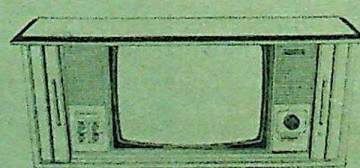
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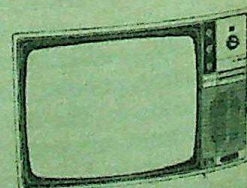
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DO-PAK RELATIONS

Worse Still To Come



RECENT events in Pakistan and India have led to the unravelling of the bilateral relationship built in the last few years. These developments have reversed the rapprochement between New Delhi and Islamabad, which has probably been one of the friendliest regimes towards India. General Zia's extended handshake with Mrs Gandhi has been met with the clenched fist of the proclivity of both sides to seek external whipping boys to substitute domestic failings. What is new is that the traditional popular consensus in either country regarding each other no more exists.

The trading of mutual allegations of interference has raised the political temperature and led to a war of words which is likely to exacerbate Mrs Gandhi's eagerness to emulate the anti-regime protests in Pakistan has been counter-productive, as it has detracted from the very purpose it was supposed to serve. The yearning for unadulterated democracy exists among the people of Pakistan as it does among other freedom-loving, politically-conscious peoples. This legitimate desire for removing martial law and restoration of democratic order via fair free elections stems from the assumption of continual denial of the constitutional rule of law would be injurious to our national interest. But this struggle for democracy is a problem for Pakistanis to sort out among themselves and no self-respecting Pakistani is willing to grant Mrs Gandhi or any other outsider the right to meddle in our affairs under the garb of "restoration of democracy". Were that the case, then Ronald Reagan's invasion and occupation of Grenada could be justified.

Double Standards: What is galling to observers in Pakistan is Mrs Gandhi's double standards which spout bleeding heart rhetoric for dissidents in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, while concurrently using strong-arm tactics against her own Sikh and Muslim dissidents without batting an eyelid. It is not difficult to visualise India's reaction to respond to New Delhi's sympathy for, say, Bhindranwale. Several explanations are being offered for the current Indian attitude. One shared view in Islamabad is that Mrs Gandhi chose to speak on the Sind situation in August because she had concluded that the military regime was on the way out and she therefore decided to join the demo-

cratic bandwagon. This view seems to have a degree of validity because senior Indian diplomats have been going about in Islamabad saying: "Who should we talk to. We don't know how long they (regime) will be there." Others feel that after its successful intervention for Tamils in Sri Lanka India was keen to duplicate its success in Pakistan by extending political support to dissidents here.

It is felt that India, by seeking to internationalise the Sind situation, is sending a message to Washington: "Don't bet on an unstable horse in Pakistan."

New Platform: There is another view that Mrs Gandhi having lost Muslim support has now turned increasingly communalistic as she needs the Hindu vote more in the forthcoming elections. Her reliance on the Hindu vote is seen as essential for three key flashpoints for Mrs Gandhi, namely against Dr Farooq Abdullah in Jammu and Kashmir, against the Sikh militants in Punjab and against the Muslim refugees in Assam. Since she cannot be overtly communalist given her secular plank, Mrs Gandhi would like to contest the elections on an anti-Pakistan platform, which could be a convenience to divert attention from domestic troubles.

Lastly, there is a feeling that after the assumption of chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), India sees a larger-than-life international role for itself. As a consequence, South Asia has been downgraded in South Block's ranking of priorities. That is why Mrs Gandhi has never condescended to visit any of her South Asian neighbours and why none of them has a friction-free relationship with India.

Growing Friction: Most Pakistani observers are now convinced that difficult days lie ahead in our relations with India. New Delhi seems to have made a conscious decision that the joint commission is as far as it can go and talks on the no-war pact or the friendship treaty are practically dead, at least until after the Indian elections are over.

A key question asked here is that whether the present Indian attitude is merely an expression of Mrs Gandhi's known aversion towards Pakistani military regimes or is it something more, that is, an imperial disposition to dictate smaller neighbours into submission. If the latter be the case, as seems evident from India's track record, then the prospects for Pakistan-India relations are bleak. Conceivably, New Delhi could also be confronted with diplomatic resistance from this region's anti-India "gang of four": Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Looming large in the minds of some

Pakistanis is the experience of 1971. Mrs Gandhi was then leading India and Pakistan had a military regime which bungled badly in a crisis situation. India lost no time in using the military option to force a "solution" in concert with the Soviet Union. Then, as now, a section of our people, under-represented in the corridors of power, felt a deep sense of deprivation. This is, of course, the "worst-case scenario".

However, the basic perception in Pakistan regarding India is that New Delhi is perhaps no more interested in "doing us in" as a nation state, but that it certainly is interested in "cutting us down to size". Specifically, the view here is that India would like Pakistan to play a role in South Asia which is akin to that of a "glorified Bhutan". In effect, a country which has to seek an NOC (no objection certificate) from India for practically every major foreign policy initiative.

Bullying Attempts: The fact is that Pakistan had conceded to India the role of regional pre-eminence which it has cherished so much since it midwifed the caesarian birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

Pakistan's concession on the joint commission, our silence on the massacre of Muslims in Assam and our muted public mention of the Kashmir dispute are cases in point which confirm the foregoing statement. Regrettably, with all its neighbours, India despite being the largest country in South Asia, has displayed a recurring pettiness or what the Americans would call, a "bully-on-the-block" mentality. The general feeling is that Pakistan-India relations will continue to worsen during 1984, with the war of words probably increasing as both sides would score propaganda point. Since governments are prisoners of their own rhetoric, they have little capacity to defuse tensions, especially when their foreign policies are a function of domestic politics. The key role in this situation can be played by non-official opinion-leaders, including politicians, intellectuals and journalists.

What needs to be realised by policy makers in New Delhi is that even if the Pakistani status quo is altered, India will not be able to wish bilateral problems away. Mrs Gandhi needs to take a good hard look at the long-term implications of some of her actions, both from the standpoint of India's national interest and the future of cooperation in South Asia. Once certain perceptions are formed, then, despite the change in realities, rebuilding bridges of understanding becomes increasingly difficult and the future remains hostage to the bitter legacies of the past.

Mushahid Hussain is the editor of *The Muslim*, an English language daily published from Islamabad, among the more independent of the newspapers of Pakistan. The exclusive guest column is being published to give readers a view from Pakistan on the current state of India's relations with that country.

PROJECT TIGER

The Roaring Success

WHEN the 1972 census put the tiger population in India at a precarious 1,827, few naturalists expected the 'king of the jungle' to survive much longer in its natural habitat. However, as World Wildlife Fund (WWF) President, Britain's Prince Philip, who himself boasts of having bagged a tiger during an earlier visit several decades ago, addressed one of the largest wildlife commemoration functions ever held in India last fortnight, a feeling of elation marked the completion of Project Tiger's first decade. Not only had the project succeeded in diminishing the immediate threat of extinction which hung over the heads of hundreds of birds, animals and flora species it had in most cases registered an increase in their wild numbers.

Project Tiger has undoubtedly been a success story on a national footing, for in the short span of 10 years it has laid the foundation for a system which can not only check the slide which set in during the late '40s through to the '60s, but has also registered a marked increase in most animal populations. The tiger itself, the animal with which the project is universally identified, has benefited tremendously, with an increase of over 60 per cent—the 1979 consensus put the population at 3,015—while other equally disturbed species like the barasingha (swamp deer), rhino and elephants also fought back from the brink of oblivion. Said H.S. Panwar, the current director of Project Tiger: "One way to save our forests was through the tiger—it being an animal almost everyone can relate to—for it created a situation where the entire eco-system had to be preserved."

Unchecked Slaughter: The post-Independence era was an ecological disaster. The population continued to grow and the pressure on forests increased, and with large tracts of jungle giving way to agriculture and human settlements, animals which were once abundant began to disappear at an alarming rate. Even though estimates which put the tiger population at the turn of the century at 60,000 might be a bit exaggerated, the situation in 1972 told its own story. While loss of habitat was one of the main reasons, the influx of poachers cashing in on the demand for animal skins also had telling effects. Meanwhile, the armed forces, with access to every region in the country went trigger-happy, shooting down almost anything that moved.

Based on a proposal put forward to the Government by the Indian Board for Wildlife, and with financial and technological help from international conservation bodies like the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, a national ban on hunting was enacted in 1972 which was followed by the setting up of Project Tiger.

Initial Steps: The project was given the complete control of nine major national parks in 1973 and subsequently Sariska and Periyar were added to the project in 1978-79. With over 1,550 sq km under it, which included the best sanctuaries like Kanha, Corbett, Kaziranga, Madhumalai and Bandipur, the



A Royal Bengal Tiger in its natural habitat: timely reprieve

management launched an ambitious project where over a third of the area was cordoned off as the 'core area'. The aim was to isolate these sections from human encroachment, allowing only conservation based studies to be done there. The remaining areas were made into buffer zones and the initial steps to relocate villages within this area and curb grazing and firewood activities while clamping down on poaching were started. Said Panwar: "We wanted to preserve as many areas of tiger habitat as possible and hence the diversity. After that we just let the land recover and the effects were almost immediate. Once the pattern of use varied, the recovery of areas was very good."

In practice however, the complete isolation of core areas proved difficult, but the management of the parks positively improved. The Kanha National Park soon emerged as the best managed park, and animals which had disappeared into the core areas for protection began spreading into the buffer zones as well, and a comparison with the vegetation outside the parks told its own story. Emphasising on the difference,

Kishore Rao from the wildlife department said: "What the project achieved in the last decade has come in for praise from every quarter. The eco-system management approach respects—birds, animals and the flora—has been fairly paid off."

But since almost all reserves have some degree of human activity, reserves to the project flared up in local villages. The Gangetic Delta are the mangroves of the Sundarbans where the pressure was felt. Tigers here have adapted themselves to the salt water conditions. Still need fresh water, and since human settlements, people were killed annually by tigers. Men in open catamarans and people taking honey from rock bees were often up, but most often it was the grasses who accidentally stumbled on the big cat.

Even though the project has spent Rs 10.5 crore in the last 10 years along with an additional Rs 10.5 crore which has been spent by the state governments, efficient implementation of its policies still remains the crux of the problem. Given the areas under their control, the guards still haven't snuffed out poaching completely, though undoubtedly the situation is much better control inside the reserves. But usually encroachers themselves are senior government officers, who have been known to shoot even in the heart of Corbett National Park.

Unless Project Tiger expands its influence (four more sanctuaries have come under its control this year bringing the total to 15), its success in the past decade might well come to naught in the long run. As animal populations rise, migration becomes a necessity. Alongside, within the confines of the project's buffer and core zones, the threat of inbreeding exists even though it will take a few generations for the defects to become obvious. Officials call areas outside the buffer zones 'multiple use areas', and their development potential if the corridors for animal migration are to be kept open. Admitted Panwar, "We have achieved a lot, but if you really think at what is required, it is only a part. Our first 10 years of existence has shown the way to handle our natural resources."

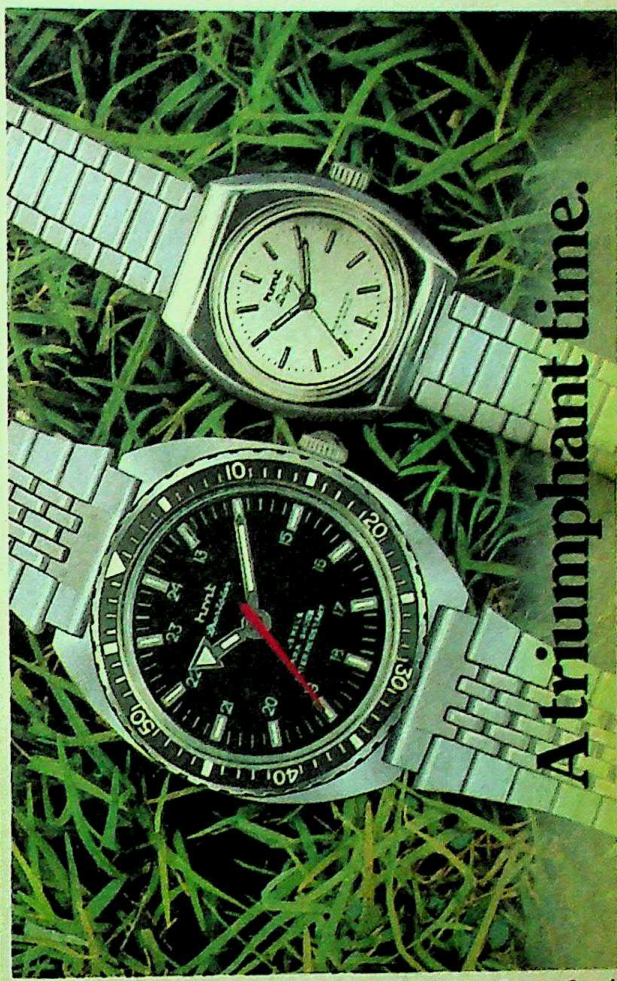
But despite the problems which still beset India's diverse wildlife, Project Tiger has projected a new lease of life. When the sun sets daily on the subcontinent, the darkness engulfs the land, and somewhere, a cheetah still stomps its feet, the bark of a kaker warns all those who are around to listen that the tiger is around.

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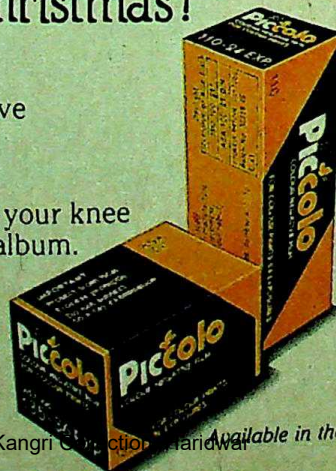
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ANDHRA PRADESH

The Blue Revolution

ANYBODY, anywhere in India, it seems, can now see X-rated pornographic films—even in the smallest villages of the country. While the pattern throughout is, more or less the same, the backwoods of Andhra Pradesh—including Tirupati and Sangareddy—have recently become especially fertile ground for the film revolution.

In the last three months, the video cassette recorder (VCR) has made its way into many of these villages that cannot yet boast street lights. Here, long before a government order from Hyderabad can reach even Taluk headquarters, the latest Hindi, English and blue films pour into the over 100 parlours that have sprung up in Andhra Pradesh's countryside.

Understandably, life-styles in these villages are changing. Every evening, after work, large numbers of people troop into the parlours and shanty cafés to regularly screen X-rated films to full houses—with the two rows reserved for men. Often the show begins with a regular censored Hindi film. After an hour or so of screening, a hard core pornographic film—or the vignette of a sex scene—is switched on. Although playing a dangerous game, the parlour-owner knows he is winning since his voyeuristic audience is too excited by this new entertainment to sneak on him.

High Returns: So, business is booming. Many of the jobless, traders, hoteliers and even high-profile politicians who have turned to the video-parlour business, there is virtually no risk involved. Initial investments range between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000 for the VCR—usually imported since it is cheaper than an Indian one—and the cost of maintaining the 50-odd seater view-

Further, with names like Badshah Cool Club, Kamadhenu Coffee Club, and Balaji Centre—used as ploys to argue that the show is free—the parlour-owners make profits without paying taxes. At the end of the day, most rake in over Rs 300 for the shows with profits increasing if there are more shows and more blue films. Said Y. Venkata Rao, owner of a parlour in Sangareddy: "Nothing succeeds like sex. One owner collected between Rs 10 and Rs 20 from those queuing to see *Caligula* and

sex films. And in the temple town, any English film with a few sexy scenes will draw a full house at all parlours."

The majority of the films screened are not only unauthorised, they are uncensored as well—films with titles like *She Will Follow You Anywhere* and *Adventures With The Plumber's Mate*. The master tape is invariably smuggled in from West Asian countries and quickly duplicated. As a result of the easy availability of both commercial and blue films, the number of video libraries in Hyderabad alone has jumped from 20 to 70 in the past three months.

Difficult Scrutiny: Officials are stumped. While the customs people can check and

stringent, those parlour-owners that do not screen blue films begin agitating. Complained T. Ramachandra Murthy, spokesman for the parlours in the Vijayawada area: "Policemen are being posted at every parlour hindering the free flow of viewers and hampering our business interests." In fact, several irked owners stormed to the high court and procured stay orders preventing the police from interfering with the show business even as the court deliberated whether video screening for public viewing is covered by the cinematograph rules at all.

Changing Values: The almost frenzied video-viewing is not only big business, it brings in its wake new sexual attitudes. Viewers are of all ages—school and college students, farm workers in the villages and office-goers who usually fill up the night shows. Mohammed Iqbal Khan, a young electrician who sees every change at the Friends Coffee

Centre, Narsapur, is not at all embarrassed by his new hobby. Said he: "We do not have sex education in schools. To those who know the facts of life these English films may seem vulgar but they are more practical than Hindi films trying to show people how to indulge in sex with their clothes on."

Others like P. Jayaprakash, lecturer in sociology, Osmania University, are worried by the very same phenomenon. Said he: "Habitual and regular viewing will lead to blind acceptance of what is seen and a steady decline in imagination and thinking. Viewing sex in large doses will reduce the gap between Indian and western sex values. The swing will be towards more divorces and greater promiscuity."

Emphasised a child psychiatrist at a government hospital who has been studying the effects of this phenomenon: "Video like TV viewing for long hours will affect the cognitive powers of children. Violence and the sale of female anatomy in films induce mindless aggression. With regular sex films, wife beating and rapes will become commonplace."

And others still are worried by the ophthalmological effects of this new obsession. Constant video viewing, warns ophthalmologist Dr P. Siva Reddy, "may turn more children blind than any deficiency in their diet". But, whether anyone will heed the warning is doubtful since all over suppressed India—even in its tiny villages—sex has, for the first time, come out of the closet and is being served in steamy cafeterias to delighted takers.

—AMARNATH K. MENON



A video parlour in Daulatabad village, Medak district: thriving business

penalise video recorders and cassettes brought into the country, they can hardly screen every video-tape to see if it is pornographic or not. Said an official at the Customs Collectorate in Hyderabad: "Passengers bring in cassettes declaring it either as an educational film or a family entertainer or cartoon film. If we are to check it, the Government may as well open video parlours at airports, harbours and the Wagah checkpoint."

Keeping a tab on video-parlours is equally difficult. In September, the state Home Secretary C. Arjuna Rao wrote to district collectors and police officials to check whether the parlours were following the cinematograph rules, and screening only censored films. When the police began making raids, the strong parlour network quickly spread the "beware" message to other parlours.

Moreover, if police checks become too

TAMIL NADU

The Venom Vaccine

THERE is hope for the victims of snakebites—20,000 of whom die on average each year—in a scheme just launched in the villages of Tamil Nadu. In what is the first attempt of its kind, the state Government has set out to train 1,260 full-time first-aid attendants and send them into the villages of snake-infested districts where they will combat the twin perils of poisonous reptiles and the taboos of superstition which prevent snakebite victims from getting prompt, modern medical assistance. Their main task is going to be to create awareness in the villages of a foolproof cure for snakebites: the anti-venom vaccine.

The scheme, which has been initiated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, will concentrate on six districts—Madurai, Dharmapuri, North Arcot, South Arcot, Thanjavur and Periyar. There will be an attendant in each of 1,260 villages in these districts who will be given a month's training in administering first-aid to snakebite victims by the medical officer of the nearest primary health centre or the doctor of the nearest government dispensary.

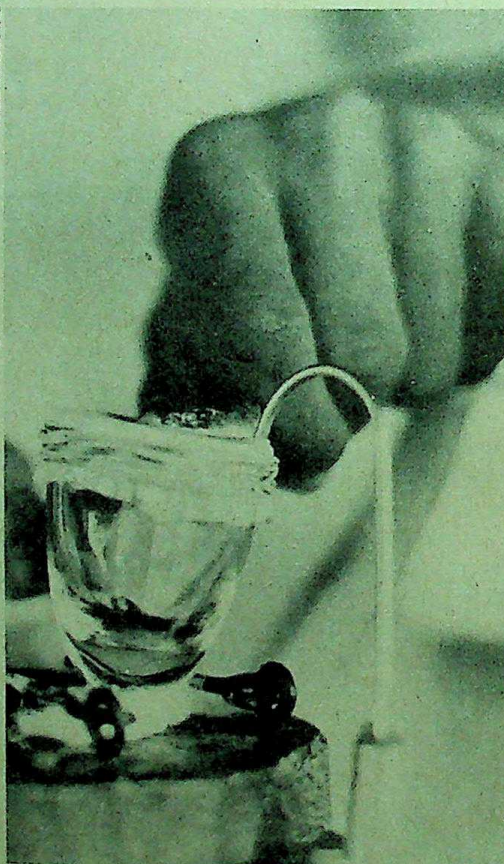
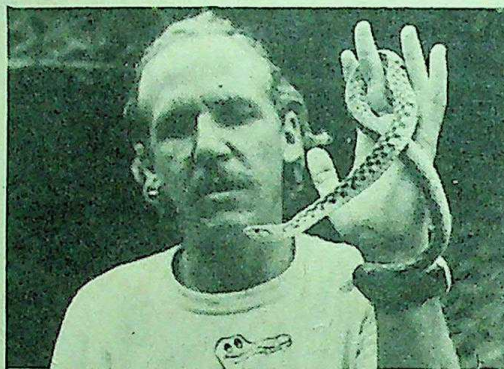
"Then, each first-aid attendant will be held responsible for the snakebite deaths occurring in the village under his jurisdiction," said Mrs Qudsia Gandhi, an under-secretary of the state Health Department. "To eliminate chances of any suppression of information by the attendants for the sake of self-interest, collectors will cross-check the statistics furnished by them from government doctors, medical officers, and even village headmen."

Local Superstitions: The task is not going to be an easy one. It will take time to bring science to areas that insist on clinging on to myths and magic. Said Dr B.B. Gaitonde of the Haffkine Institute in Bombay, which is one of the major national producers of the anti-snake venom vaccine: "Probably no discipline in the practice of medicine is more riddled with fables, folklore, myth and superstition than that involving the treatment of snakebite. The folklore cures in snakebite are hazardous. They often involve dangerous methods and delay the use of really effective measures."

So deep indeed does superstition run down the Indian rural vein that it sends the ordinary villager, when bitten by a snake, running to a professional snakebite healer rather than to a dispensary to take an injection of the anti-venom vaccine.

The village healer chants mantras, applies the so-called snake stones—really only charred and polished pieces of bone—to the

wound which supposedly suck out the poison. Or he uses herbs, the very bitter leaves and roots (high alkaloid content) of certain plants. Said Romulus Whitaker, director of the Madras Snake Park, in his book *Common Indian Snakes*: "In early times, the bite of a snake must have seemed the epitome of a sudden blow of fate or the gods. Even today, snakebite arouses fatalism and superstitious fear in many areas. Quack doctors and country remedy men have always made their fame and fortunes by catering to snakebites with all kinds of strange 'cures'... cures that may kill the patient unless the venom does so first."



Whitaker (top) and extracting venom from a snake: fighting superstition

Because of this superstition has as many deaths alone as the rest of the world put together. According to Whitaker, two 'A's are essential for any effective comprehensive programme: "One, awareness of an 'awareness' among rural folk and ensuring adequate supply of the 'anti-venom vaccine'." To bring about this awareness, the state Government has allocated Rs. 10 lakhs for the printing of pamphlets and posters for circulation in the villages. Said Mrs Pichamma Viswanath, assistant director of the King Institute of Preventive Medicine, Madurai: "The posters will tell rural folk of the danger of rushing to the nearest dispensary or hospital after being bitten by a snake (the vaccine must be taken within five to six hours of the bite of the patient). The propaganda material will also enlighten villagers on the precautions they can take, like wearing shoes and wearing themselves fully while working in the fields."

More important, the King Institute has already supplied vials or ampoules of anti-venom vaccine to every primary health centre and government dispensary in the districts. Adequate supply is imperative, for often the victim, even when rushed to a hospital on time, has died because of the non-availability of the vaccine. This is largely due to the haphazard growth of small producing agencies in areas where there is assured supply of venom.

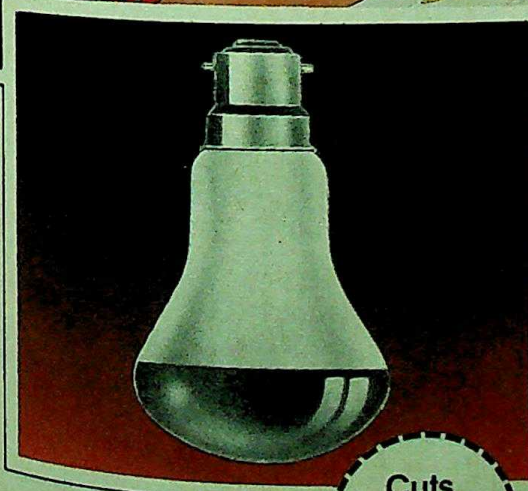
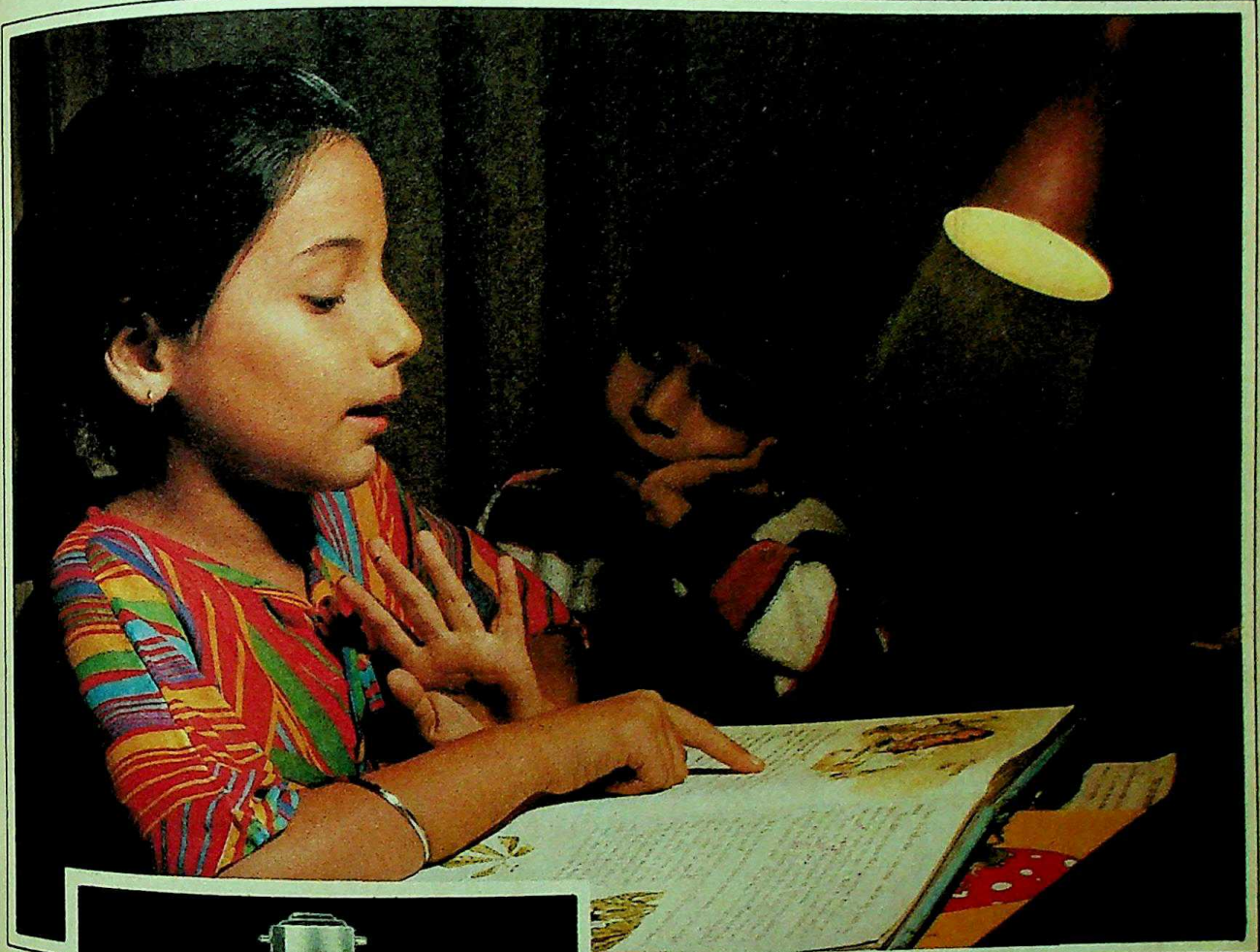
Adequate Supply: The Tamil Nadu Government has thought of all that. The King Institute started a pilot project in 1984 of annually producing 300 ampoules of vaccine. Last year, production increased tenfold and the institute made 3,000 ampoules. Under the scheme, 6,000 ampoules are to be made this year and in 1984-85, that figure will be doubled.

Says Pichamma Viswanath: "Getting sufficient venom is no problem. To manufacture 12,000 ampoules of the vaccine, we require about 50 gm of venom. The village cooperative will be easily able to supply this quantity." The Irulas are a tribal community of snake-catchers, and Whitaker feels that cooperatives should be organised in the states as well, especially those with high snakebite deaths—West Bengal, Orissa and Maharashtra. Besides providing legal employment to snake-catchers, the vaccine has export potential. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, especially, are starved of it.

In India, to adequately stock distant rural dispensaries and hospitals is a problem, then. And soon, the Tamil Nadu Government will send off trained attendants into its backward, snake-infested areas to wean the villagers away from their superstitious habits. The way is there—now it has only got to be the will.

—S.H. VENKATRAMAN

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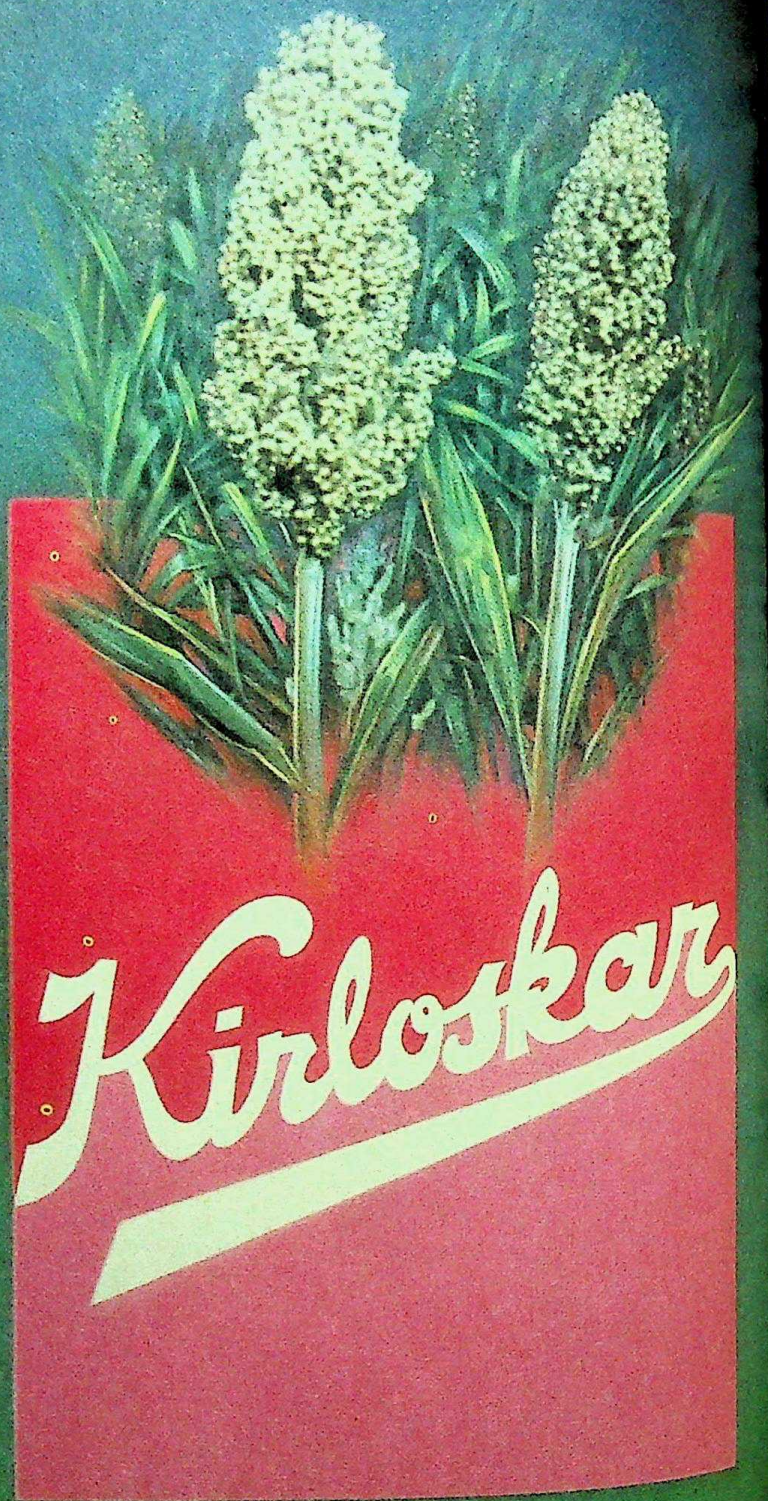
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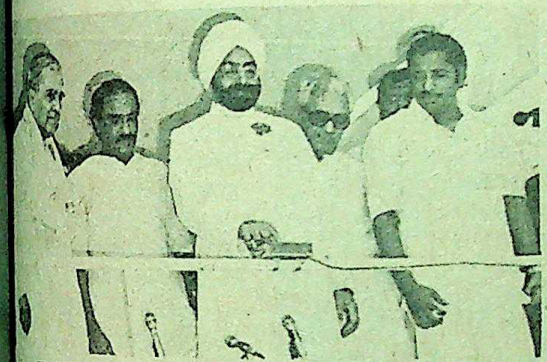
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Inspect Act

WITH seven out of every 10 Malayalees classified as literate, education is no minor matter in Kerala. Consequently, the opening of a new university in the state is usually an occasion for celebration. But if that is what state Education Minister T.M. Jacob expected for his child, the new Gandhiji University at Kottayam, he was rudely disappointed. As it transpired, the response to the Gandhiji University Ordinance was anything but celebratory.

Even before the university was inaugurated in October by President Zail Singh, it generated much opposition. Critics see the ordinance as the opening salvo in a war against academic autonomy which will make the institution named after the Mahatma no better than a glorified government



Zail Singh and Jacob at the inauguration: growing opposition

ment with minimal powers in matters of appointments.

The new university does not, in any way, provide a new academic facility. It is merely an administrative effort at reorganising the unwieldy structure of higher education in the state by splitting the large Kerala University. Kerala's 215 colleges have been grouped under the rather large umbrellas of Cochin and Kerala universities. The 64 alone administered 127 colleges, of which 64 are now to be within the jurisdiction of Gandhiji University.

Political Aims: The new scheme, insofar as it makes for more efficient administration, is welcome. But the ordinance, typically, has its darker side. Students and teachers are opposed to it on two counts. One, they see the founding of the university at Kottayam as a strategy to woo the state which has had a long standing desire for a university in the largely Christian belt of Travancore. More than half the population in Kottayam, Ernakulam and other districts—which are to be covered by Gandhiji University—are Christian institutions. Politically, the move is sure to yield

rich electoral harvests for Jacob's Kerala Congress (Joseph) group in these districts.

But what has attracted more widespread criticism is the effect the ordinance will have on the autonomous functioning of Kerala's academia. The syndicate, the supreme administrative body of the university, with 23 members is to be larger than that of Kerala University and will include nine government officials as ex-officio members. Thus, the Government should be able to muster a majority in any situation and influence, if not dictate, all university decisions.

Suspensions of the Government's intentions are strengthened by some other clauses of the ordinance. For instance, appointments to important university offices such as registrar, finance officer and controller of examinations will be made by the Education Ministry. The syndicate will only submit a panel of names for these posts and even its appointments to posts with less than Rs 400

basic pay will be subject to government approval.

Strong Opposition: Some members of the Kerala University syndicate have voiced strong opposition to the ordinance. S. Ramachandran Pillai says: "The new varsity would be without any academic and administrative autonomy and could be a mere rubber stamp." There is also a fear that once it is successfully implemented in Gandhiji University, control will also be extended to other

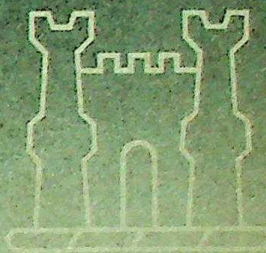
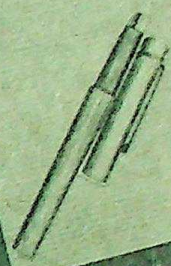
institutions. Another syndicate member and Congress(I) MLA, K.C. Joseph, spoke of "a new era of government control on universities".

Jacob, in the face of controversy, is unfazed. He dwells proudly on the fact that "Gandhiji University has been brought into existence in record time". He claims that "it is clear that the Government has no intention of interfering in the academic affairs of the universities. At the same time, the Government should have some reasonable control over the economic and administrative affairs of the universities."

But his claims have largely been buried under the rising chorus opposing the move. In Kottayam, the walls have sprouted graffiti, the handiwork of other constituents of the ruling front. Says one: "Gandhiji University—research centre for corruption." By last week, it was obvious that the vociferous opposition to the scheme was set to snowball. With Jacob stubbornly defending his ground, Gandhiji University is likely to be a hot political issue in Kerala at least till the general elections come around.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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JUDICIARY

Injudicious Moves

SLOWLY but surely the Government is getting a judiciary to its taste. Its most potent weapon in the long drawn-out struggle has turned out to be its power to transfer judges at will. Last fortnight it was once again showed its might by moving Allahabad Chief Justice Satish Chandra to Calcutta and Punjab and Haryana Chief Justice S.S. Sandhawalia to Patna.

With these two shifts the Centre looked well-set to achieve its professed goal of having an outsider as chief justice in every high court. Already it has shifted the chief justices of 12 high courts. Of the remaining six, four do not have permanent chief justices. Only Delhi's Prakash Narain and Madhya Pradesh Chief Justice Guru Prasanna Singh have been spared in the spate of transfers, and Singh has survived only because he is to retire in January 1984.

Inevitably, the transfers have caused a storm in the legal community. Most lawyers dismiss the Government's argument that its transfer policy has been blessed by both the Law Commission and the Supreme Court. Even before the latest transfers, bar councils had passed resolutions flaying the transfers. Says H.M. Seervai, a senior advocate: "Every transfer contains an element of punishment and vindictiveness." Adds Pran Nath Lekhi, BJP functionary and a Supreme Court lawyer: "The ruling party has adopted a high-handed attitude towards those judges who have refused to toe their line. While independent judges are being served with marching orders the pliable ones have been retained at their bases to serve the ruling party."

Guidelines Violated: Critics of the transfers claim that their charges can be backed by evidence. It is enough, they claim, to look at the Government's own guidelines for transfers and see how they have been violated. The salient features of the transfer policy were laid down in Parliament by Union Law Minister Jagannath Kaushal on November 15. The main points are:

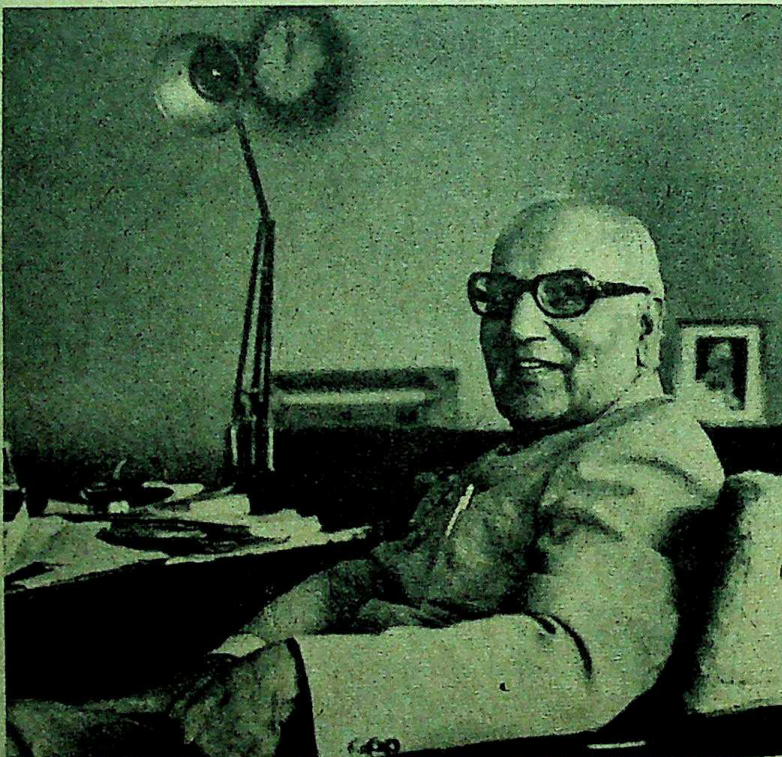
- A chief justice who has

only one year or less to retire may not be transferred to any other high court.

- A judge in a high court who has one year or less to retire should be considered for appointment as chief justice of his own high court, subject to his seniority in the profession.

- For the purposes of elevation as chief justices, the all-India seniority of judges will be taken into account for appointment as chief justices in high courts of other states.

An analysis of the recent appointments and transfers reveals that in a majority of the cases the Law Ministry has violated its own norms. Of the 343 permanent judges of various high courts over 20 were superseded while selecting new chief justices for Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan and Gujarat. For



Kaushal: violating his own norms

The Government's opponents see a definite reason for these inconsistencies. They point out that the men who were transferred were either those who were appointed by non-Congress(I) governments or those who had opposed the Government's nominees for the Bench.

example T.S. Misra, a senior judge of Allahabad High Court, who was 58th on India seniority list and fifth in Allahabad High Court. Similarly, both P.K. Bhanu and Vazhakkulangerayil Khalid, chief justice of Jammu & Kashmir were transferred over the heads of their colleagues in their own high courts. There are several other grant violations of the Government's lines. Examples:

► Syed Anwar Ali, till recently acting chief justice of the Patna High Court, ought to have been confirmed in his post as he has only 10 months left in service. But the Government transferred Sandhawalia to Patna.

► Khalid who took over as chief justice of Jammu & Kashmir is also due to retire in July 1984. According to the Law Commission's recommendation Khalid should have been made chief justice in his own court.

► By sending Padmanabhaiah Subramanian Poti as chief justice of Gujarat, the Centre government dislodged Padmanabhaiah Dinkar Rao Desai, who was acting chief justice and had blocked the promotion of Arun Naginlal Suri, who was to retire next summer.

Apart from these gross violations the recent transfers have not done anything to reduce the number of vacancies. Not a single permanent appointment has been made to replace Sandhawalia and Chandra. The Law Ministry has still to fill three vacancies for Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh which are being managed by acting chief justices. It has also not taken any steps to fill the vacancies which will crop up in the next two months in Madhya Pradesh.

The Government's transfers see a definite reason for these inconsistencies. They point out that the men who were transferred were either those who were appointed by non-Congress(I) governments or those who had opposed the Government's nominees for the Bench. For instance, Chandra was appointed chief justice of the Allahabad High Court by the Janata government. In the last few years it is no secret that differences between the Government and the Union Law

over appointments pushed up the number of vacancies in Allahabad from nine in 1981 to 16 in 1983.

Justice S. Chandrasekharendra S. said that Chandra protested strenuously about his transfer when informed about it by the Chief Justice of India Y.V. Chandrachud. Similarly Sandhawalia who was also appointed chief justice of the Janata era, differed over the transfer of judges. And although it is true that the transfer of Khalid from Kerala to the Centre was guided mainly by political considerations, it is also a fact that the Centre has likely to have faced stiff resistance to its nominees from the former chief justice Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

While the Government has shown tremendous enthusiasm for shifting people from one court to another, it has not shown the same alacrity in making permanent appointments. No replacements have been announced for Chandra and Sandhawalia. Acting chief justices are likely to be more

susceptible to pressure, and are likely to oppose the Government's nominees for the vacancies in the two courts. Desai, who is the Madhya Pradesh High Court which have been stalled for the last one year because of differences between Gurunath Singh and the state government. These posts are in all probability, going to remain vacant until they retire in January next.

Apart from all this, the Government's appointments in the last three years again show that it has flouted its own proclaimed intentions. While the Government maintains that it is committed to induct one-third of the judges in each high court from outside the state hardly a handful of the 100-odd new high court judges have been outside.

The bar councils say that the Government will only weed out those judges who are antagonistic to the Congress(I) states. A senior advocate of the Delhi High Court: "Why the Government start implementing its policy from the first stage of recruitment appointing one-third of the judges from outside the state? Obviously it wants to victimise some marked judges." Nevertheless, the Government

is ploughing ahead with its plans, heedless of the protests from both the Bench and the Bar. At a meeting of high court chief justices in New Delhi earlier this year, Chandrachud is said to have faced heavy criticism of the Government's ad hoc policies. Chandrachud was directed by the meeting to call on the prime minister and formulate a logical policy for the transfer of judges. He did meet the prime minister and other officials of the Union Law Ministry in March, but it did not deflect the Government from its chosen course.

Chandrachud's hands are also tied by the Supreme Court decision in early 1982 which ruled that the Government had absolute powers in the matter of appointment and transfer of judges and that the prior approval of the chief justice of India was not necessary. After that the Government was left more or less free to pursue the course started in 1980 when former law minister P. Shiv Shankar set the ball rolling by transferring chief justice K.B.N. Singh from

Patna to Madras and sending Madras chief justice M.M. Ismail to Kerala. Ismail did not accept the decision and quit immediately, causing a furor.

Opposition: But efforts to pack the Bench have foundered because Chandrachud and many of the chief justices opposed the Government's choices. Besides this the Congress(I) has run into opposition from the non-Congress(I) governments which have taken over in Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Says Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde: "We will not be a party to any attempt of the Central Government which either destroys the independence of the judiciary or aims to politicise it."

The Bar is also going to great lengths to make sure that its protests are heard. In Gujarat lawyers struck work after Poti was transferred from Kerala. On November 7 an all-India lawyers convention held in Ahmedabad and attended by the delegates of the bar councils of most states appointed a high-powered panel to protect the independence of the judiciary. Earlier the Bar Council of India termed the recent transfers as an "act of victimisation for their honesty, integrity, boldness, independence and fearlessness." A strongly-worded resolution adopted by the meeting also said: "The Bar of this country legitimately feels that the Government wishes to humiliate and denigrate certain judges whom it does not find completely pliant and congenial."

Despite such protests, the Government has, inevitably, been able to whip up a good deal of support from pro-Congress(I) lawyers. Says P.R. Mridul, a former judge of the Bombay High Court and a senior Supreme Court advocate: "One should not view the transfers with a narrow political objective in mind. By bringing chief justices and judges from outside the state the Government is insulating the judiciary from local pressures and pulls. It will strengthen the people's confidence in the judicial set-up." Mridul's views are bound to be echoed by the Government for the people apart, it will certainly strengthen the Congress(I)'s confidence in the judiciary.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

HARI OM GUPTA

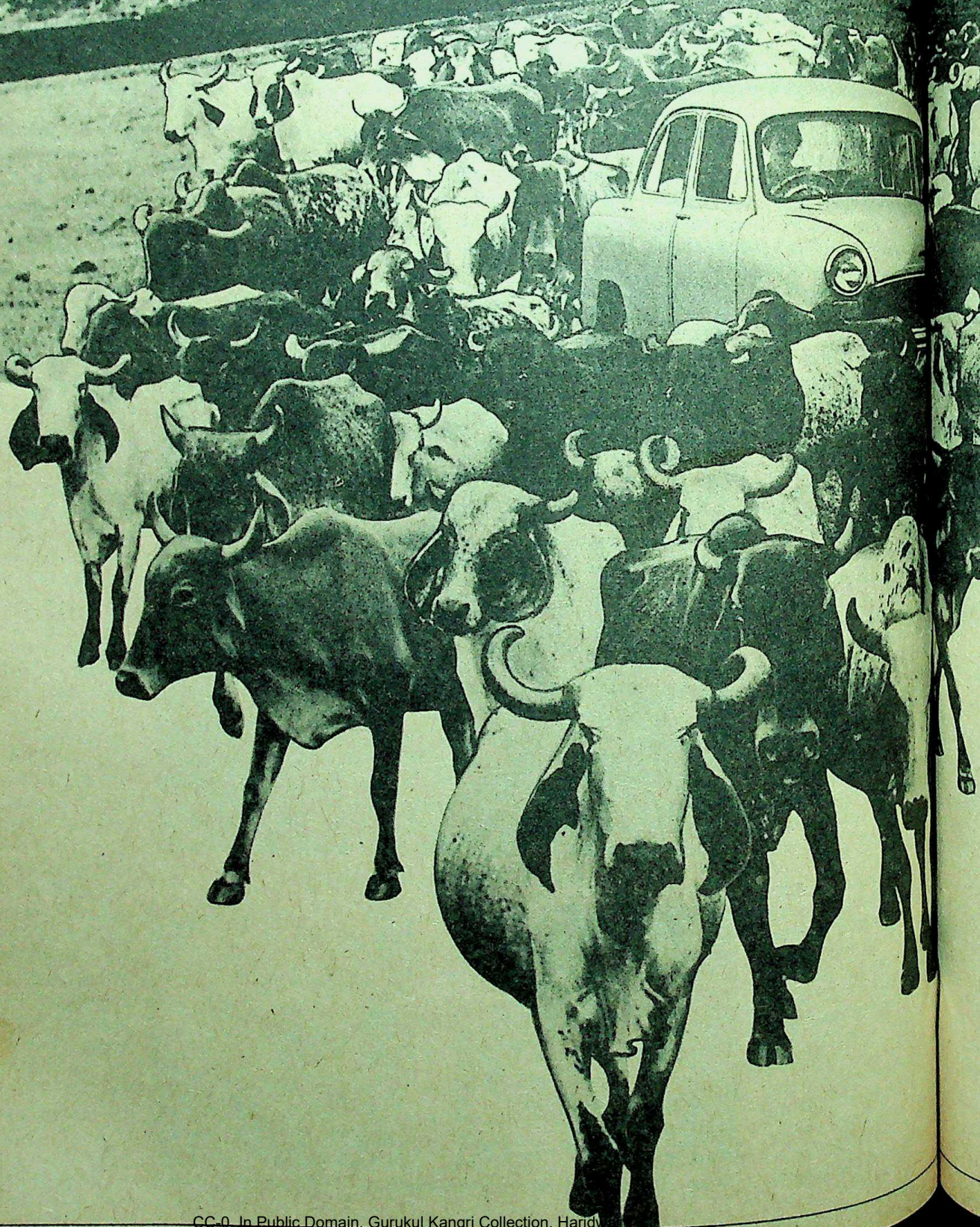


Chandrachud: facing heavy criticism



Satish Chandra and Sandhawalia: opposing Government nominees

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TAMIL REPATRIATES

Unhappy Homecoming

PEOPLE who leave one country to settle in another inevitably face a number of problems. The stateless Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka, who are being repatriated in Tamil Nadu under the Sirimavo-Shastri pact since 1967, face many problems. In recent months, after the bloody violence that swept across Sri Lanka in July, their situation has been brought into sharp focus. Government

THREE years ago, Natarajan, 28, was doing well as a driver in the Kagala Atal tea estate area near Colombo. With his brothers, sisters, and parents all working, and a brother in business, the seven-member family made 2,500 Sri Lankan rupees a month. "With rice selling at a subsidised Re 1 a kilo, we had no problems with food," he recalls. "We were provided a small house on the estate itself, and we had nearly an acre of kitchen garden. We were even allowed to rear cattle."

Then, in March 1981, the family was shipped to India under the pact signed by prime ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri of India and Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka to repatriate to India 6 lakh stateless Indian Tamils settled in Sri Lanka over a 15-year period. The period was later extended by two years.

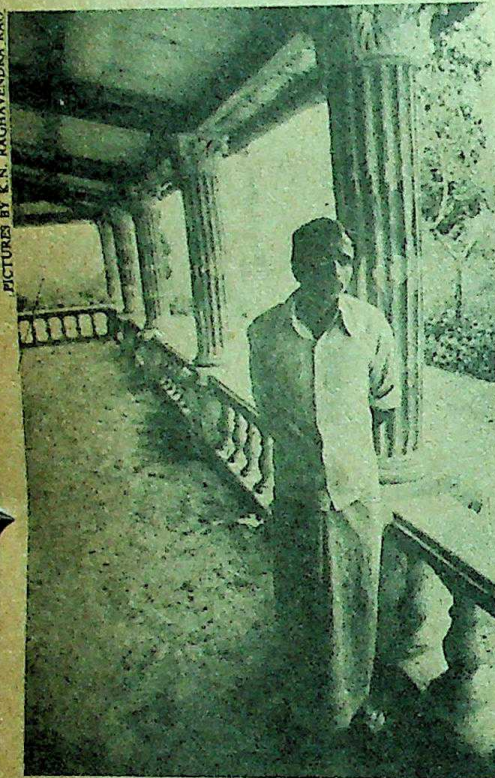
"We came to Kandy, to the office of the deputy Indian high commissioner, and sought tea estate jobs in India," recounts Natarajan. "After all, that is what we were used to. Our request was summarily turned down on the grounds that no tea estate jobs were going. We were marked for the so-called business loan scheme under which our family would be provided a small loan to set up some kind of a business in a specified district of Tamil Nadu. We agreed and took the ship from Talaimannar in Sri Lanka to Rameswaram."

Inadequate Loan: At the Mandapam camp for Sri Lanka repatriates in Tamil Nadu's Ramanathapuram district, Natarajan and his family were given a loan of Rs 3,000 by the rehabilitation authorities, Rs 500 in cash and the rest as a bank draft encashable after a month, to set up a petty shop or something similar in Madurai district. Asks Natarajan: "What could we do with such a measly amount of cash? It didn't even last us for food for a couple of months, what with rice selling at an exorbitant Rs 3 a kilo here, let alone to scout around, make enquiries and contacts, and do the spadework to set up a small business."

The penniless family ultimately arrived in Coonoor in the Nilgiris district in desperate search of tea estate employment. But not even the Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Corporation (Tantea) floated in 1976 with the express purpose of absorbing repatriate estate labour, would accommodate them, because the family had already been earmarked for the business loan scheme. Natarajan and his family now survive through casual work on private tea plantations and construction sites. Says Natarajan: "My parents are now

too old to work. So only I and my siblings slog every day. Finding work is very difficult. Even casual jobs we manage to land only about three days in a week, and for a pittance of Rs 7 to Rs 10. We didn't bargain for this."

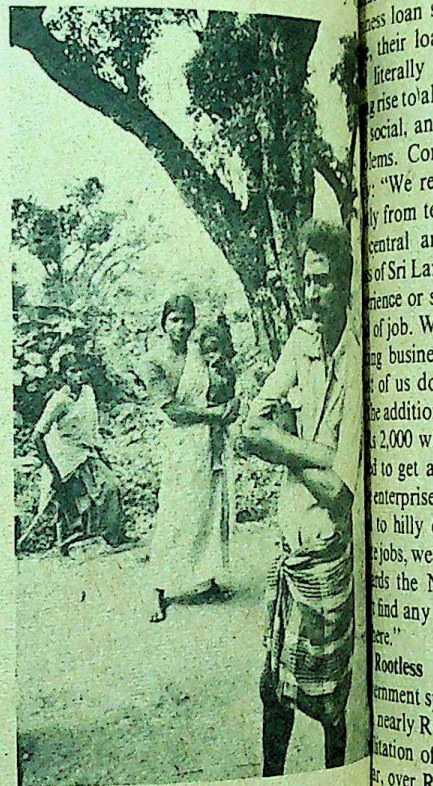
The Natarajan family is among the 1.1 lakh families—or about 4.35 lakh repatriates—who have so far come in under the Sirimavo-Shastri agreement. On an average, 20,000 to 30,000 repatriates have been coming to India every year since the agreement in 1969. The ethnic riots in Sri Lanka in 1983 do not seem to have had any effect on the flow of repatriates.



"Even casual jobs we manage to land only about three days in a week and for a daily pittance of Rs 7 to 10. We didn't bargain for this."

—Natarajan

schemes barely scratch the surface of their problems, the natives appear to be hostile to the outsiders whom they brand as good-for-nothing, and the repatriates themselves complain of difficulty of living properly in a land which has little to offer them. Last fortnight, Correspondent S.H. VENKATRAMANI met a wide cross-section of Tamil repatriates, travelling throughout Tamil Nadu, to look at their existence in their new home. His report:



"We stateless Indians should have had no problems surviving there. It is even better to die in Sri Lanka than starve in India."

—Muthuswamy

cant impact on the pace of repatriation. Around 7,500 have come in after the agreement since October 23, 1983, when the ferry service between Talaimannar and Rameswaram was suspended for the year. It will be resumed in the third week of January, when the Strait will calm down and become navigable.

"Why should the recent riots in Sri Lanka bother us?" asks Muthuswamy.

business loan recipient who, after his tea estate in Gudalur gives the other side of the story: "Repatriates are hardly ever taken in as permanent employees on private tea estates because they are not disciplined. When they come to you for a job they will be most subservient and humble. But once they attain some kind of status they tend to become unruly. Repatriate women are, of course, very good and experienced in plucking tea leaves, but during the flush season you can always get them as extra casual hands." He points to the increasing complaints of theft at night of tea leaves by repatriates: "Tea leaves fetch Rs 4 to Rs 5 a kilo, enough for a meal."

"These repatriates are bone-lazy, that is why we don't employ them as permanent workers," observes Raghavan, a field conductor in another private tea estate company. "Particularly the men. The men have to be employed in pruning, spraying weedicides and so on; and they do it in a slipshod manner, all the time keen only on finishing the day's work, pocketing the few coins, and making a bee-line for the nearest arrack shop. We can't afford to inspect all the work they do in detail, so the best way is to keep them away." "These repatriates are thoroughly inefficient, that is why you won't find them in any private estate," adds Ipe, an assistant field conductor of the same company. "Private estates, you know, unlike Tantea, have to survive in a competitive market. They cannot afford to engage useless hands."

Native Anger: The repatriates are not particularly liked by the local Tamils. Says Natesan, a private estate worker near Gudalur: "These repatriates keep to themselves, and do not socialise with us locals. Lazy and not used to any work, they can only clamour loudly for all creature comforts." Argues Joyce Mary, a local Christian Tamil in Coonoor, whose shack is flanked by those of repatriates and whose husband is also a casual construction worker: "We are also a five-member family with only one earning member, my husband, who also does only casual contract work. We manage somehow. My husband does an honest day's work for the money he earns, and doesn't scamper off to the nearest arrack shop at the end of the day."

"Not that local Tamils do us any particular harm, but you see we are not looked after at all," complains M. Subbiah of T.R. Bazar near Gudalur, another repatriate and a casual construction worker. "What is the use of deliberately getting us over to this country and making us starve? What is the fun of giving us a couple of thousand rupees and consigning us to the heat of Pudukottai or Madurai district? We are all used to cold hilly climates and tea estate jobs. We didn't want a business loan to start with, but it was



"Repatriates are hardly ever taken in as permanent employees on private tea estates because they are not disciplined. When they come to you for a job they will be most subservient and humble. But once they attain some kind of status, they tend to become unruly."

—Tea estate manager

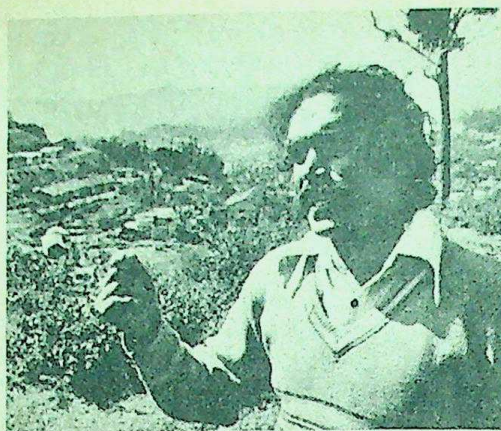
literally thrust down our throats." But that is only one side of the story.

SUCH arguments cut little ice with the natives. "These repatriates are not only good for nothing, but also ungrateful," explodes a top rehabilitation official. "Hardly any of them have repaid the loans. Of course, the Government does not also expect them to return the money, but then the non-repayment indicates how the repatriates are faring." The official, a former managing director of the state cooperative spinning mill, discloses that after business loans, the second largest rehabilitation scheme is the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Spinning mills: 2,664 repatriate families are employed in these spinning mills throughout Tamil Nadu. "But I am sorry to say that a repatriate does only one-fourth of the work of a local in a spinning mill. The repatriates seem to be only good at tea estate work, and even there they are indisciplined and lazy." Another state IAS officer, a former managing director of a cooperative spinning mill, and who is now a district collector in Tamil Nadu, supports this verdict: "These repatriates are a nuisance with their inefficiency."

The performance of Tantea, which is obliged to absorb repatriates straightaway on a permanent basis, drives home the point about inefficiency. Founded in 1976 with a paid-up share capital of about Rs 2.6 crore, it had accumulated equivalent losses in 1981-82. "Only in the last financial year were we able to turn the corner and make a working profit of about Rs 8 lakh," reveals a top official of Tantea in Coonoor.

Poor Performance: In sharp contrast, companies with comparable estate holdings like Malayalam Plantations, Tea Estates of India Limited, and Cooperative Workers Society, make staggering annual profits of Rs 4 crore each. None of them employs repatriates except as stray casual labour. An official partly blames the compulsory extra overheads of Tantea for its relatively poorer performance, says he: "Apart from paying a worker Rs 11.58 for a day's work, we are obliged to provide him accommodation, and a kitchen garden. Private companies, on the other hand, are obliged to provide accommodation only to 8 per cent of their permanent labour force."

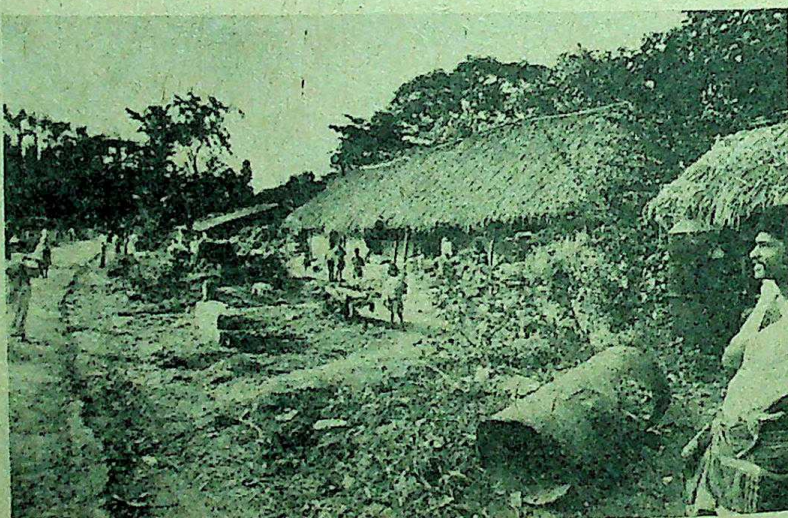
Besides, Tantea's estates having been planted recently, the bushes aren't mature yet



"We repatriates are being ruthlessly exploited. We are doing more work for lower wages."

—K.M.A. Subramaniam, union leader

and the yield is comparatively low. Says a spokesman: "Our leaf yield is only around 4,500 kilos per hectare, compared to the 6,000-7,000 kilos in company estates." But that is not reason enough for Tantea's poor record. Admits an official: "The daily workload private estates set on their workers, particularly men, in pruning and spraying weedicides and pesticides, is easily 10 per cent more than ours. We are trying to step up our workloads in stages, but there is



For the families landing at Rameswaram, uprooted from the hills and plantations which were their homes for years, clutching their pitifully few possessions as they take their first steps in what is largely an alien land, nothing seems to work.

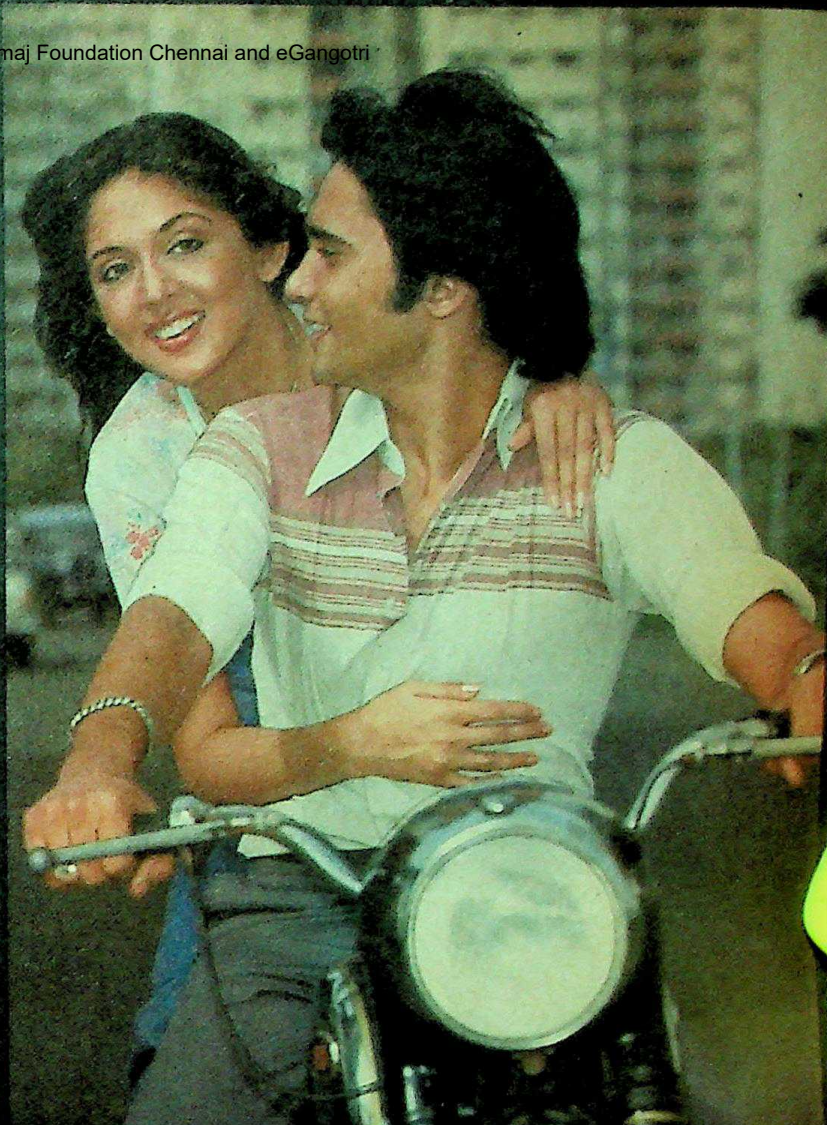
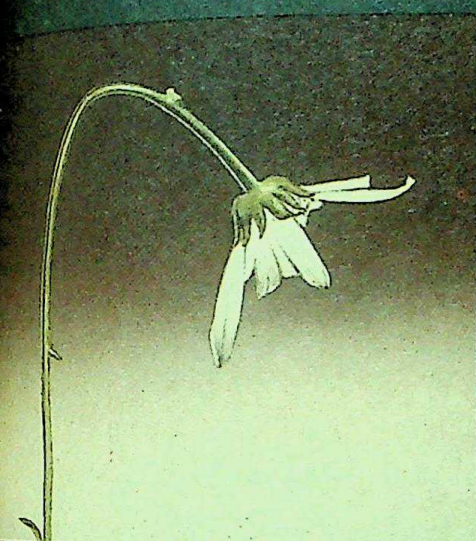
tough opposition from the United Front Federation for the Plantation Workers Union, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, and the Labour Organisation." Counters Subramaniam, general secretary of the Plantation Workers Union Congress: "We repatriates are ruthlessly exploited. We are doing more for lower wages."

Cheap Housing: The workers have other complaints. Grumbles Paramasivam, a Tantea worker: "We repatriates are large families. Each family has eight members. Tantea provides employment only two members. And the accommodation? Houses so cramped that we squeeze ourselves in. Each family has a couple of cents of kitchen garden. The cent is one-hundredth of an acre, the way back in Sri Lanka each family was an acre to grow vegetables. Every member of a family could also work in Sri Lanka far happier in Ratnapuri near Coonoor where I was living." "We are all not doing family planning," explains Bagyan, a woman, part of a family of ten. "Family planning is all modern. We may be made all of us can work. Why shouldn't we be given employment?" "These repatriates have started demanding employment on their right," frets Ignisius, a range officer at Tantea. But there aren't enough jobs. So the repatriates steal tea leaves and cut down forest trees and sell firewood.

1,000 repatriates make a livelihood selling Gudalur forest trees," says a local forest official. "They also illegally export to Kerala and Mysore."

Despair, anger, frustration, complaint: by all counts, repatriation has been a messy business so far. Families landing at Rameswaram, uprooted from their homes for years, clutching their pitifully few possessions as they take their first steps in what is largely an alien land, nothing seems to work. The authorities appear to have been blindly implementing sighted loan schemes and to have washed their hands of the whole problem. It has even begun to be asked what else may be possible. No one has, as yet, any answer to the question that like Paramasivam others ask: "Why were we brought here at all?"

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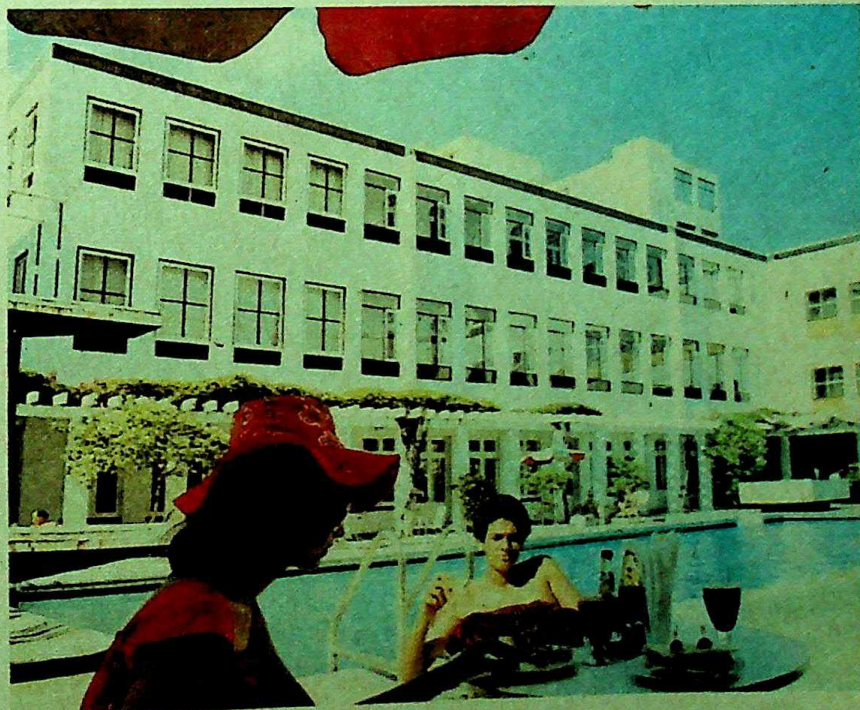
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EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

INDIAN companies are finally beginning to test the water regarding oil exploration, with a number of large business houses deciding to enter the field. The Thapars have sought government permission to set up a new joint venture, called Greaves-Dixilyn Drilling Company, which will have 50 per cent foreign equity participation. Simultaneously, another venture—called Hindustan Oil Exploration Company—has been floated by the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) and a number of business houses. Yet others who have been toying with the idea of entering the field are the Tatas and Mahindras, but they are still to formally launch their projects. The new companies that have been formed intend to take up direct oil exploration as well as supporting facilities—for which the Government is now willing to give Indian companies a 10 to 12 per cent price preference.

MOVING TO THE DOCKS

THE NEW rage in Indian industry might well be the setting up of floating dry docks at the country's major ports. With Escorts positioning the first of these in the Nhava-Sheva port and other companies like Mazagon Docks Ltd and the Corporation of India (both public sector) thinking of doing so, the new trend has just begun. The Madras Port Trust, for instance, has invited bids for a joint venture to set up two floating dry docks in the Madras port, one of them with the capacity to service up to 45,000 tonnes. Escorts itself is planning to set up two dry docks, probably off Mangalore, in collaboration with the Korean company Hyundai Construction Company, which is the world's biggest shipbuilders and repairers.

GOING AHEAD

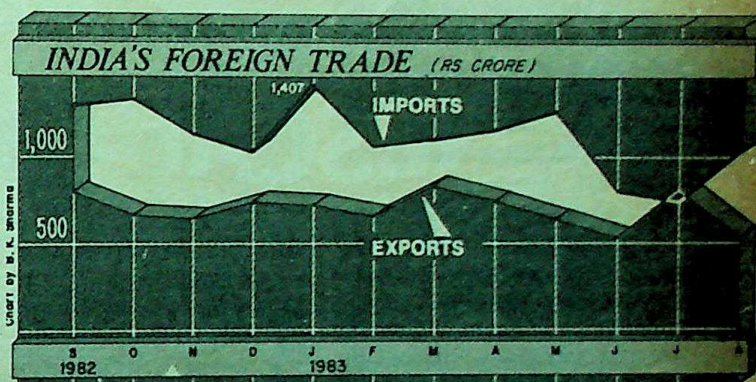
THE TATAS have managed to steal a march over their main corporate rivals, the Birlas. Figures of group assets, turnover and profits released recently for 1982 show that the Tatas are worth Rs 2,430.83 crore, well ahead of the Birlas' Rs 2,004.74 crore. As recently as 1979, the Birlas had been ahead of the Tatas. Now also the Tatas are now streaking further ahead with Rs 1,135 crore, compared to the Birlas' Rs 2,367.08 crore. In group assets the Tata total is Rs 213.66 crore, against the Birlas' Rs 180 crore. The Tatas have now recorded a 120 per cent growth in assets in four years, a 110 per cent growth in turnover, and a 100 per cent increase in profits. In comparison, the Birla growth was 80 per cent, 72 per cent, and 15 per cent, respectively.

SE DIVIDED

THOLLY Indian-owned drug companies are up in arms over the Government's willingness to treat companies with less than 40 per cent foreign ownership as Indian companies. It was not a serious problem earlier, since the majority of foreign-owned drug companies had an overseas equity holding of over 40 per cent. But with companies like Hoechst, Pfizer, Glaxo and numerous others coming down to 40 per cent or having offered to do so, the Government has been free to enter low-technology pharmaceutical areas, which were previously reserved for Indian companies. These latter have now protested at this, claiming that the international companies are still in effect controlled by them. A drug industry working group has been split down the middle on this issue, with a formal note of dissent being submitted. The Government has decided that they will have to take up the issue with the Government and lobby for fresh curbs on the foreign-owned drug companies.

HOPEFUL TREND

THE FOREIGN trade picture shows some signs of improvement, but there is likely to be a yawning trade gap for the fourth year running. In both 1980-81 and 1981-82, the deficit had been around Rs 5,800 crore, with a slight reduction to Rs 5,400 crore last year. In the first five months of this year, the deficit was Rs 1,760 crore, down from Rs 2,060 crore in the corresponding



months of 1982-83. If this trend continues, the final deficit may be under Rs 5,000. This will be largely because of lower imports of bulk items like petroleum, while exports so far have grown by around 8 per cent. The picture would have been still brighter were it not for substantial imports of foodgrains.

SICK BENEFITS

ROHTAS Industries, the Bihar-based multi-product corporate giant headed by Ashok Jain, is being declared a sick unit by the Bihar Government. The management had been trying for some months to get the company placed on the sick list, but the state Government had been dragging its feet, arguing at one stage that only those units in the company that were not doing well could be declared sick. The management has now had its way, with the state Government agreeing to declare that the whole company is sick. This opens the door for large-scale financing by the financial institutions and banks for a rehabilitation and modernisation programme, at reduced rates of interest. In addition, the company stands to benefit from lower sales tax imposts in the state, as well as a lower electricity tariff, apart from other benefits.

The company, with net sales in 1981-82 of Rs 86.59 crore, has been in the red in recent years barring 1980-81 and has not been declaring any dividends. Only the cement unit is doing well, following the introduction of dual pricing last year. Most of the other units—manufacturing vanaspathi, car'stic soda, paper and so on—are in the red. Among the country's corporate giants, this was once the largest unit incurring losses, but has recently slipped in the rankings.

GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS

In Close Company



BUSINESSMEN are close to governments everywhere, except, of course, in communist countries where there are no businessmen as a separate class, as there the Government itself is in business. But in most democratic countries, businessmen and government leaders generally work together or avoid working at cross purposes, though there may be serious differences between the two on specific issues. In India, the distance between business and government has varied from time to time, from mutual suspicion during the Nehru regime to a rather cosy chumminess during the Emergency. Contrary to popular belief, businessmen were quite friendly with politicians even during the Janata regime which, under Morarji Desai, was characterised by a pronounced distaste for any class, business or otherwise, that had supported the previous regime.

Most of us who worked in the Government during those days tried to keep businessmen and the ubiquitous liaison men at bay but I am not sure whether we succeeded. On my very first day in Udyog Bhavan, the first man to call at my office was a 'representative' of a multinational company, in fact, the largest foreign company in India.

He knocked on my door and came in. I am so-and-so, he said, and gave me his card. Since there had been no announcement about my appointment, I asked him how he knew I was there.

"Oh," he said, "the grapevine."

Contact Attempts: The grapevine was apparently quite busy, and by lunch at least a dozen men had seen me, including three company chairmen (among whom was a man who, I was told, was the richest man in the country), four managing directors and three 'liaison' men. Among the lot was the chairman of a large and powerful public sector company, who came with a bunch of art-pulls for an advertisement campaign.

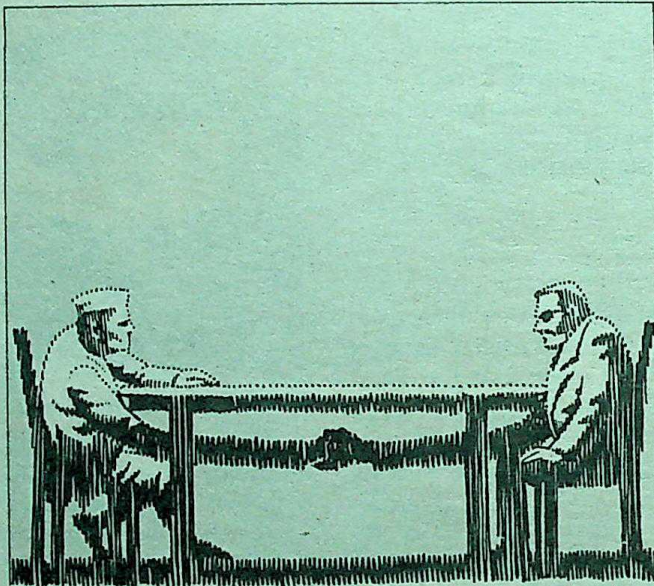
"It's a major campaign and we thought you would like to see it," he said, as he deposited the stuff on my table.

I saw the ad and told him it was too blatant. It was a plug for the party that had just come into power, though not in so many words, and I told him it would be unwise for him to get so close to a political party. Years later, when both he and I had ceased to have anything to do with the Government, I asked

him what had prompted him to come to me that morning, with all those fancy designs under his arm.

"I couldn't very well walk into your room just like that and thought the ad campaign would be a suitable introduction," he said candidly.

In a country with such a tightly controlled economy, it is natural for businessmen to think that they should not fall foul of the powers-that-be, but some go quite overboard and get so chummy with the politicians that you cannot tell them apart. They do prosper but sometimes they come unstuck too. Those who keep their distance may not prosper all that much, but they do not suffer either.



Strict Principles: Last week, I was visiting a factory near Chandigarh which makes high-quality precision castings for the transport industry. That part of Punjab has been suffering from chronic power cuts but I noticed that this particular factory had done quite well and its production had actually improved.

I asked the manager whether he had to go out of his way to get his power supply. He knew what I meant.

"No," he said. "We have never made it a practice to do that, and they know that we would rather close down than grease palms all round. So, we get what is due to us and there are no hassles."

This is not, of course, always the case, but by and large, it pays to stay away from the power system. Most foreign companies in India do not have income tax people chasing them as they know they would not get anything out of them, except perhaps a junket once in a while to Kashmir and Ooty.

Over the years, however, there has been something of a problem, both for the system of big business as well as that of the system. In the recent beef tallow case, the main issue was not the fact that the tallow was being imported under government licence, not even that it was being used for cooking edible oils, but the adulteration being allegedly done by a company said to be close to the ruling party. The situation, of course, was that the company was hand-in-glove with the ruling party politicians, and the filthy lucre was going into the party coffers. Had the company been closer to, say, one of the opposition parties, would they have raised the issue? In such cases, it is the consumers who ultimately suffer and are left with virtually no redress to justice.

Political Connections: In many countries, including those which are democratic, it is not unusual for businessmen or business groups to support a party of their choice openly. In Britain, it is well known that Cadbury's has a long association with the Conservative Party, going back to the days of George. The Labour Party, on the other hand, has a strong anti-private sector policy and is not expected to have friendly relations with capitalists but that is not true. There are quite a few Labour Party members in England and they support the party, and if not the party, some of its prominent members. For example, Sir Robert Sainsbury, the head of the Sainsbury chain of food shops, has no bones about his support for the Labour party, nor does Sir Robert Murdoch, a Czech refugee who twice tried to join the Times group and is now in the running for the purchase of the Labour-leaning Mirror group. The supporters are of course legion, as one might expect; after all, it is their party. Rupert Murdoch, who now owns the Times and is said to be one of the most powerful newspaper publishers in the world, is a Thatcher supporter and makes no secret of it either.

Nearer home, we have the case of the Indian business community, which has a red relationship with its rulers. The image of the Pakistani businessman, as portrayed by a local intellectual, is that of a local intellectual, as portrayed by Stanley A. Kochanek in his book, *Business and Politics in Pakistan*. *Groups and Development*, Oxford, 1968. "Pakistan's business today is characterised by nepotism, bribery and unacceptable malpractice, including under invoicing, hoarding, black marketing and adulteration, price manipulation, sale and resale of licences."

unfair means, concealing profits for purposes of tax evasion, acquisition of foreign assets by not surrendering foreign exchange, fictitious deposits and holding of benami shares, nepotism and keeping doors closed to talent and ability."

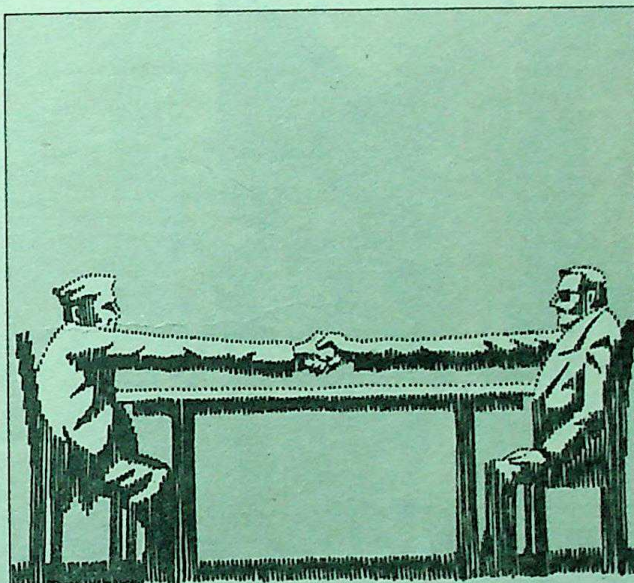
AKISTAN, Kochanek says, increasingly saw private wealth as the product of corruption and exploitation. The secretary of the Industry Ministry, watching the whole thing from his ringside seat, "The entire industrial edifice built up in the country bespeaks of the failure to take account of social imperatives leading to corrupt practices and exploitation of the common people by a handful of privileged persons. The Government produced a class of entrepreneurs who proved to be totally oblivious of the national interest. They were byproducts of a closed economy, protected by a wall of tariffs, tax holidays, foreign exchange allocation at cheap rates and a general lack of competition. None of them can really claim that their ability as entrepreneurs was a material factor in the building up of the industrial empires. It was taxpayers' money, the high prices paid by captive consumers and the lavish use of foreign exchange at cheap rates that were responsible for their prosperity. The fact that the same Government started controlling banks, insurance companies and other institutions further aggravated the situation to the detriment of the common man." The alleged concentration of industrial and economic power was transformed into a potent political force in 1968 as a result of Mahbub Ul

group. The now famous 22 families speech. The election, as it had an electrifying effect on public at- their party, which surprised even Haq, who sev- who now appears later revealed that his speech was be one of the aimed against the business community in the way was intended as a symbolic criticism of and makes the entire system of distribution and social ave the case. as it had developed during the Ayub n have had a families owned all the wealth in Pakistan, its rulers. The simply was not true. Modern industry, businessmen as 1968, accounted for only 10 per lectual, as in his perspective of the national product, and, in any is in Pakistan. This speech had focussed on control and ent, Oxford Is ownership, Kochanek says.

Major Issue: Concentration of econo- is today is dis- power was also a big issue in India in the bribery and en- when a study of industrial licences re- e, including the- that some business houses, notably eading, black- tyas, had succeeded in pre-empting ion, price po- a large number of licences, and the le of licences s- tations and counter-accusations in Par- ment led to the appointment of an inquiry

committee which, for all I know, is still in existence. Nothing really came of it, for nothing was expected to. The Birlas continued to prosper, and now share the top two positions with the Tatas. G.D. Birla was never much impressed by the fact that his group was No. 2 (and, for some time, No. 1) nor unduly agitated over the inquiry into the affairs of his group.

"I never had any problem with the Government," he once told me, "as long as Nehru was there. I knew him well, of course but our relations were not close. I never went to him with my problems—though he did call me when he had problems—for I knew that he was not favourably disposed towards businessmen as a class. Whenever I had any problem, I used to telephone so-and-so—and he mentioned three names, all of them civil servants, one of whom is now dead, one retired and the third still active in the



Government—and the four of us would meet and sort out our difficulties. When you are setting up a big factory, the point that it is a Birla factory is neither here nor there. It is after all a national enterprise, and the country suffers if the project doesn't get through. These civil servants appreciated this point and gave me whatever help they could."

No Links: In fact, GD's relations with Congress ministers were never really as close as his critics make out. Morarji Desai was apparently even more suspicious of and hostile to businessmen—at least some businessmen—than Nehru, and GD's meetings with him often ended in fireworks. In the case of the Birlas, as probably in other cases, it is the relationship at the bureaucratic level that often matters more than in the higher reaches of the political spectrum. But the bureaucracy too is part of the political system, for the link between business and the Government traverses the entire system.

However, GD did not have to deal with men like Bhutto who, according to Kochanek, put a large number of businessmen in jail and often refused to see them. "You may call yourselves respectable but the common man calls you parasites and blood-suckers," he told them at their very first meeting at a hastily arranged conference in Karachi airport's VIP lounge. He asked for their support, but went on to nationalise one industry after another, beginning with cooking oil and ending with banks and shipping, in 1974. Business hostility thereafter became so intense that funds began to fill the coffers of the opposition Pakistan National Alliance movement. Businessmen said they had their own party, a fictitious one, of course, called the Permanent Government Party. "Bhuttos come and go," they said, "but we are here for ever." Under Zia, of course, things are different, for Zia is accused of being too chummy with businessmen, or at least, his generals and colonels are.

The lesson is clear. In a liberal democracy, which Pakistan never was but India is, the different interest groups should function openly but independently within the political system, and should in fact be permitted to do so. They will naturally try and influence one another, but that is indeed what democracy is all about. You have trouble, however, when they cease to be independent, as, for instance, when civil servants bend backwards to please their political bosses, or politicians bend rules and worse to accommodate businessmen. There are strong business lobbies in America which are always trying to influence decision-making in the Congress (at legislative level) or in the White House (at executive level) but their operations are perfectly legal and they go about their work in a professional manner. When they try to influence Congressmen or executives in the bureaucracy through means that are not quite above-board, the FBI jumps on them as well as the law-makers, quite a few of whom have been sent to jail for their troubles.

The same is true in England as also in Japan where the business- government nexus is particularly formidable. But this did not prevent the Government from hauling former prime minister Kakuei Tanaka before the courts on a charge of corruption. Despite, or maybe, as some people argue, because of this nexus, Japan has prospered, for the nexus does not gum up the political works, as it has done in Pakistan where the entire development process has been skewed. In an open society, as on the stage, everyone must act freely, for the show must go on.

BUSINESS

NATIONALISED BANKS

Frauds and Failings

Can you bank on Indian banks? Consider the following:

Problem No. 1: Banks are supposed to be custodians of your money. But banks this year are likely to be defrauded of Rs 40 crore, up from Rs 16 crore in 1969. The number of bank frauds has risen alarmingly, to an expected 2,600 this year from 1,639 in 1979.

Problem No. 2: In institutions where rectitude should be the password, scandals erupt like so many festering boils. The chief executives of two major banks quit recently in a cloud of controversy. Another departed in questionable circumstances in 1982. And 600 bank officials were prosecuted last year for their involvement in frauds.

Problem No. 3: Mammoth sums lent out by the banks may never come back. Barely half the sums lent out to farmers and small-scale industrialists are recovered, and the situation with large accounts is often no better. Anything up to Rs 1,500 crore worth of loans may have to be written off in the course of time—and this does not include millions of doubtful accounts.

Problem No. 4: The banks continue to make profits, and some of them do pretty well for themselves. But a few now teeter on the edge of financial viability. And yet other banks manage to stay out of the red only because of profits earned on international operations.

Problem No. 5: The banks are no longer able to keep their house in order. Their books are not balanced, entries do not tally, branches are not audited. Work has fallen into arrears by years—some banks are still sorting out transactions that took place as long ago as the 1960s, and there are millions of ledger entries which remain to be tallied.

To this extraordinary list of failings could be added others: poor customer servicing, basic problems with staff trade unions, archaic procedures, increasing political interference. India's banks are in trouble and in need of help.

This picture could be overdrawn. After all, the major banks still make profits, there

have been no bank failures, and leading bankers continue to insist that the system is in sound health. But they also admit, 14 years after nationalisation, that unless matters are taken in hand quickly, something could give.

Mammoth Frauds: The mammoth cases of fraud that hit the newspaper headlines are

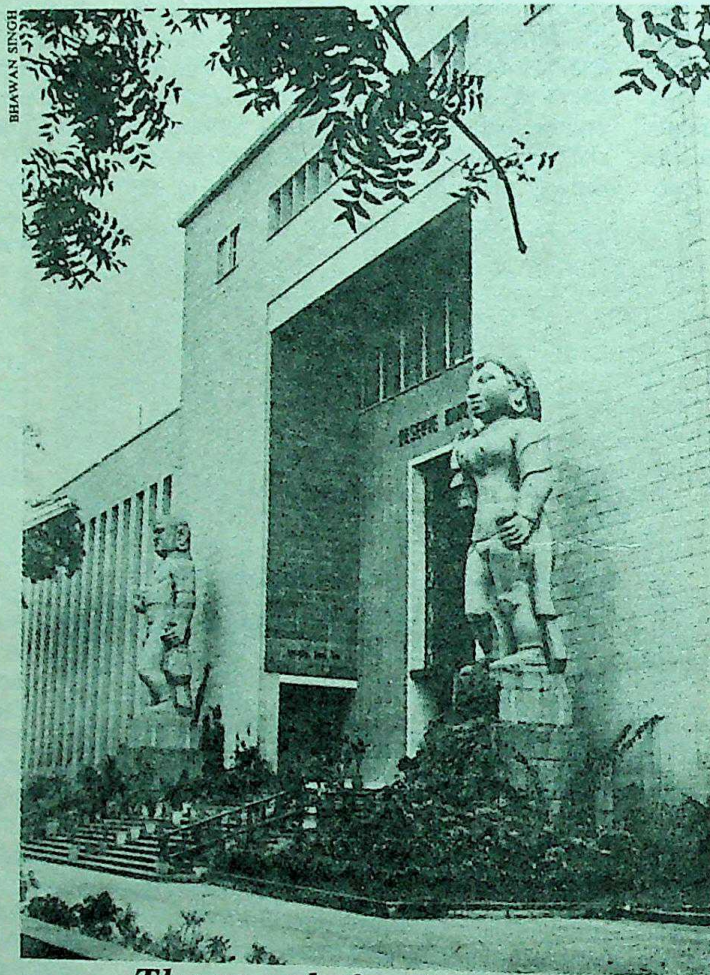
again to the different banks, with them catching on till it is too late. Bombay again, in the biggest fraud so far, a manufacturer of intercom systems the mind-boggling sum of Rs 13 million hoodwinking his bankers in collusion with associate firms.

Frauds involving customer accounts are one thing, but corruption at the top is something else altogether. And recent headlines have driven bank chiefs into greater disrepute than ever before. In Karnataka, raids on the residence of the former man of Syndicate Bank, Raghupati, unearthed Rs 100 crores worth of assets that could not be accounted for. The Government hesitated to take action, despite admitting that a prima facie case existed; but Raghupati had to go.

Up north, meanwhile, Khurana, chairman of New India Assurance, was embroiled in a messier controversy concerning a letter of credit for Rs 13.1 million opened by his bank in favour of Jain Shudh Vanaspathi. The import of beef tallow. The letter of credit was dated June 5, 1980, very day on which the Government had imposed a ban on beef import—for contracts supposedly entered into earlier.

But as investigations proceeded, frequently by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed, the company was formed only after the bank and the company were on forged letterheads. Khurana (who is charged with holding back vital information from the bank board) and the General Manager, J. S. Sethi, went on leave while the RBI suggested a full-fledged enquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Sticky Loans: Earlier, repeated versions had engulfed the Punjab and Bank (PSB), headed till early 1982 by Singh. Large loans were given to various companies in which Singh's members had substantial interests. The loans, as it turns out, were given



The spread of social banking has also brought about the politicisation of banking in several unfortunate ways.

Lending targets are frequently set, not by the banks or the RBI, but by the Government.

the most obvious indicator of rot having set in. In Gandhinagar, a bank clerk systematically defrauds the State Bank of India, where he works, of Rs 3.5 crore over a period of some years. In Bombay and Delhi, a well-known Parsi businessman defrauds no fewer than 11 banks of up to Rs 9 crore by hypothecating the same goods over and over

title deeds as security, and without scrutiny. In August 1982, the bank cleared proceedings against Singh. It also has the distinction of controlling the maximum number of controversies, ranging from missing stationery (the new Chairman, Mohinder Singh, says that there was no proper scrutiny for stationery), to loans for the fictitious sale of trucks in Jalandhar and Raipur, to the financing of speculation in property. Leaders have also charged bank officials with opening back-dated letters of credit for the import of tetracycline and oxytetracycline after these were banned in import policy last year.

Numerous other banks have had records sullied in less publicised but equally scandalous cases. The Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) is charged with having made advances of over Rs 90 crore in ventures in Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong despite adverse reports from financial experts, and the company is now unable to honour payment obligations.

It also lost Rs 5.5 crore in financial dealings with private non-banking companies in the Gulf, while its Hong Kong branch lost Rs 2.5 crore on forward transaction in foreign exchange. In the case of IOB's international diversification, it has approached the bank's board for Rs 131 crore to write off the loss of Rs 5.5 crore, a loss which, documents show, could have been avoided if the bank had heeded warnings from several quarters. In June 5, 1982, the Government announced that it was taking over the bank's operations to numerous others that are increasingly coming to light, but the frauds themselves are more important for the damage they expose in the banks' ways of doing business.

In any case of fraud," says R.P. Bhat, chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI), "you will find that there is some internal involvement or some external involvement." Thus, the Parsi businessman got involved with Rs 8 crore because none of the bank's staff bothered to carry out proper verification of the goods that had been hypothecated to them. Said the regional manager of a foreign bank that was involved in the case: "Because of his stature and the confidence he gave, we could not do proper checks. So he hypothecated the goods to 11 different banks."

The clerk in Gandhinagar was in turn exploiting the fact that inter-bank clearances were not tallied for years, and missing sums were simply not entered in the ledgers. This was almost a repeat of an earlier case in the mid-1970s, when a senior official in Dena Bank

defrauded it of Rs 45 lakh over three years; he was finally caught only when he went on leave and some discrepancies were noted by others.

In the majority of such cases, the frauds would not have been possible if the banks' books were in order. But arrears in tallying inter-branch and inter-bank transactions are now so huge that many senior bankers confess that they can't sleep in peace. A Rajya Sabha committee, headed by Era Sezhiyan, went into the problem recently and surfaced with the most hair-raising discoveries. At the end of 1981, the State Bank of India had

seemed to have completely broken down.

MOST of these transactions will ultimately be tallied without problems, and the figures—frightening as they are—would then be reduced to manageable proportions. But, to start with, the tallying of such transactions is taking place at a snail's pace, with the committee reporting that "it is doubtful whether the arrears as at the end of 1977 will be cleared in many banks even by the year 2000 A.D."

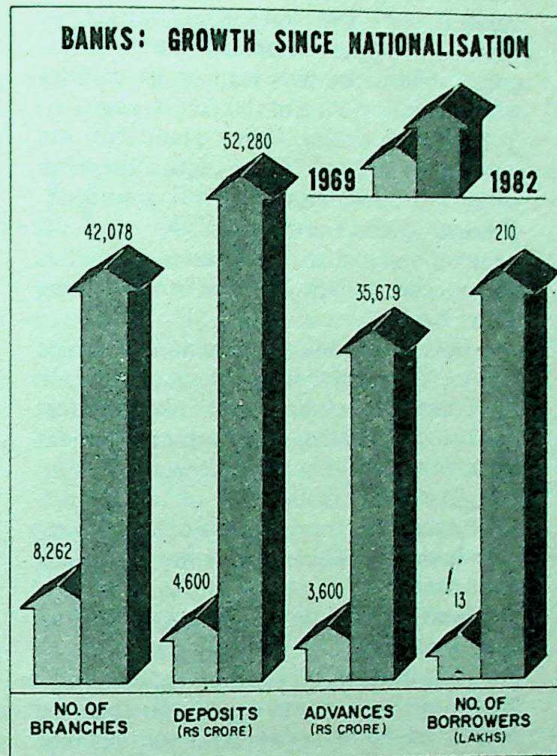
Then, and more important, the delays provide all the manoeuvring room needed for people to commit frauds in the safe knowledge that they will go undetected for many years. Sezhiyan does not mince words when he says: "The figures of frauds reported by the Government are very small. These are only the tip of the iceberg."

That assessment is disputed by S.L. Baluja, chairman of Punjab National Bank (PNB), who feels that the problem of frauds is over-blown. But Baluja does not dispute the fact that accounts arrears are a major problem that the banks have to sort out. And the spokesman of two other banks admitted that they were now considering writing off the very old, unreconciled transactions.

The Sezhiyan committee, meanwhile, goes on to list other equally unnerving discoveries. In almost every annual report of every public sector bank, there are notings about "non-preparation, non-completion, non-reconciliation and non-scrutiny of several items of accounts and schedules"—which the committee lists over seven printed pages. Ledger accounts were "pending for scrutiny", subsidiary ledger balances did not agree with the general ledger, and in many cases there was no proper external audit of branch operations.

In the case of SBI's associate banks—like the State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur—the audit was restricted to the bank's head office, while in others branch audit often took place only once in three years. The result: between 10.7 and 23.5 per cent of the branches in some banks were in arrears on their basic accounts. Asks Sezhiyan: "Every bank has nominees of the Government and the Reserve Bank on its board of directors. What have these people been doing all these years? Have they just been adorning their chairs?"

Ad Hoc Figures: The chaos these disclosures suggest is further testified to by branch managers of banks. One of them, in south Delhi, said that when he was first posted to the branch, he found that interest due to the bank from borrowers had not been totted up for a year, and had



System overload is a major reason for the mushrooming problem... the sheer volume of transactions, co-existing with unchanged systems and procedures and the failure to mechanise accounting has led to a near collapse of basic housekeeping in banks.

outstanding (unreconciled) inter-branch transactions totalling an incredible Rs 38,378 crore. Another public sector bank had not matched 4.8 million transactions. And seven other nationalised banks were not even in a position to assess the problem they faced, because they had got no figures from their branches. The reporting systems



—Era Sezhiyan, MP

System overload is clearly a major reason for the mushrooming problems. After 14 major banks were nationalised in July 1969, bank branches have grown in number from barely 8,000 to over 42,000. From an average of 100 new branches a year in the 80-odd years of Indian banking before 1969, the number of new branches annually accelerated to almost that number every fortnight! Deposits have grown from Rs 4,600 crore to Rs 52,000 crore, and advances from Rs 3,600 crore to Rs 35,000 crore. Even more important, as Baluja of PNB points out, "The number of people borrowing from the banks

And RBI officials who insist that the bad debts in the case of rural loans are not out of line with those in other credit sectors, indirectly lead one to the conclusion that the overall health of assets in bank balance sheets provides cause for worry. As S.K.



—Mohinder Singh, chairman, Punjab & Sind Bank

In the most recent case, the Ministry asked the banks to identify the very poor in Delhi and give them loans at a concessional 4 per cent rate of interest. On November 19—the prime minister's

another case, this time in Ambala dis-
manager of the State Bank of India
erred to be placed under arrest by the
administration because he would not
to the people placed before him.
bankers frequently complain of local
bosses dictating who should get mo-
scenario sometimes repeated at the
or state level. A former deputy go-
of RBI, decrying these trends, pointed
some of the bigger loan scandals in-
the nationalised banks had as their
the promise of political contribu-
the loans came through. "This has
facilitated by diluting the authority of
vesting real control of the banks with
division in the Finance Minis-

afford to be said.
This tussle came out in the open recently
the Finance Ministry threatened to
away from RBI the power to give licences
for all the banks to operate in the country.
RBI's refusal to allow one par-
foreign bank to operate in the coun-
the threat never materialised, but the
borrowers concerned was given the licence.

Political Appointments: The politicisa-
total income of banks has gone one step further in
the introduction of bank boards
people affiliated to the ruling party. In
y, that some of PSB, one director—Jamuna Sola-
used by a former Congress(I) MLA from
Talwar of Pradesh. Another, Surinder Singh
se to some of President Zail Singh's son-in-law. A
ve the state of Keshav H. Kulkarni, is a leader of the
self in the Congress-affiliated Indian National Trade
Congress (INTUC), and a fourth, Jas-
high Kochar, is a Congress(I) leader.
the case of Andhra Bank, Lok Sabha
Balram Jakhar's son Sunil Jakhar is
In the Central Bank of India, Ravi
Datta, a prominent Congress(I)
of the Ghazipur district in Uttar Pra-
a director. These cases could be mul-
ad infinitum (see INDIA TODAY,
15, 1982).

When quizzed on this, bank chairmen
that they have not had problems with
wards, but one pointed out that boards
over-step their powers. As a result,
finance minister recently summoned
them and pointed out that it was the
of the management to manage and
wards to lay down policy. Neverthe-
bank chairman confessed privately
there was tremendous and continuing
on everything from granting loans
to transferring staff. "I must
most of us have not given in to these
but it is also true that some have,"

politicisation of the banks apart,
growth since nationalisation has
management problems. SBI
recruits 10,000 new staff every

year, and senior bankers complain of poorly
trained staff and inexperienced managers
being forced into positions of responsibility
where they either do not know how to handle
the work or are not equipped to tackle
complex situations where fine judgement is
called for. PNB's Baluja points out that when
he became branch manager after 12 years of
experience, a quarter century ago, it was con-
sidered unusual and eyebrows were raised.
But today PNB is often forced to appoint
branch managers with barely two years' ex-
perience in banking. The massive recruit-
ment programme has also meant that there is
no proper check of new employees' antece-
dents—which is given as another reason for
the increasing involvement of bank staff in
frauds.

RAPID growth is also one of the rea-
sons for the pressure on bank
profitability. A new branch takes
between three and five years to start making
profits, sometimes seven years. Given the
pace of branch expansion in recent years,
this has meant that one-third or more of a
bank's total branches are in the red.

However, an assessment of bank profi-
tability remains among the most difficult
tasks in an area where secrecy is a byword.
To start with, most banks do not declare
their full profits, keeping a good chunk aside
in secret reserves that are disclosed to only a
handful of people. For another, the banks do
not show separately the profits earned on
their domestic and foreign operations. In a
field where domestic operations have
become increasingly less profitable, while big
money is available abroad, composite fig-
ures could prove entirely misleading if used as
a basis for making judgements.



**"There is a little doubt that
many banks now survive on
foreign profits."**

—S.C. Suneja, executive director
New Bank of India



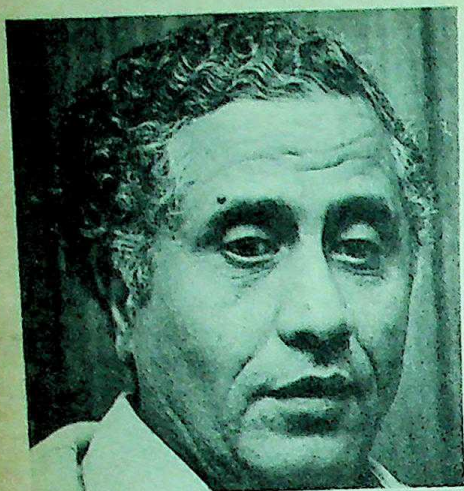
**"Profitability ratios
would have been better
if the government had not
impounded over 40 per cent
of bank funds at low
rates of interest."**

—S.K. Verghese, professor, National Institute of
Bank Management

For instance, S.C. Suneja, executive di-
rector of New Bank of India, confesses that
"there is little doubt that many banks now
survive on foreign profits." Echoing this,
A.C. Shah, general manager of Bank of Ba-
roda, said: "Foreign operations are now the
single largest source of profits for Bank of
Baroda." Yet a third problem with bank
profitability figures is that substantial win-
dow-dressing is obviously taking place if bad
debts are not fully provided for.

Within these limitations, overall bank
profitability figures have held up surpris-
ingly well, with SBI registering a 45 per cent in-
crease in profits in two years, and the 14 na-
tionalised banks achieving a 27 per cent in-
crease in the same period. Indeed, Verghese
of NIBM, who has just published a book—
*Profits and Profitability of Indian Commer-
cial Banks in the Seventies*—argues that
"profitability ratios rose during the 1970s
and would have been still better if the Go-
vernment had not impounded over 40 per
cent of bank funds at rates of interest that
result in a loss for the banks. The impact of
this on profitability should be taken into ac-
count".

Showing Profits: Bank of Baroda's
Shah argues along similar lines and points
out that the profits are there despite the large
amounts locked up in sick units (close to Rs
1,500 crore, without counting small-scale in-
dustries). P.N. Joshi, manager (planning) in
Bank of India, calculates that 43.5 per cent of
bank funds—taken from depositors at an



"The number of people borrowing from the banks has grown between 1969 and today from 13 lakh to 210 lakh. PNB's own borrowers have grown in number from 40,000 to a million."

—S.L. Baluja, chairman, Punjab National Bank

average 7.5 per cent rate of interest—is taken away by the RBI and the Government at an average rate 6.5 per cent. A further 40 per cent of what remains has to be given to priority sectors at up to 12 per cent (which probably does not cover administrative costs). Any profits the bank wants must therefore be made out of what remains, after neutralising the losses on funds given to the RBI and the Government.

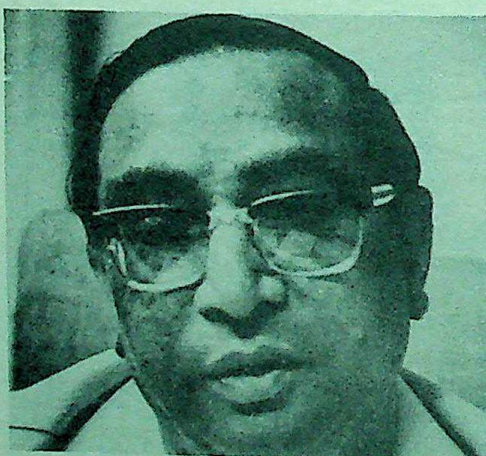
But while overall banking profitability has held out well, some individual banks have often been in trouble. In the case of Oriental Bank of Commerce, the profit in 1975 was a grand total of Rs 285—a fact that had big depositors checking anxiously on whether their money was safe. Later, around 1980, a fraud case involving over Rs 7 crore surfaced around the time the bank was nationalised, and a former senior employee recalls that confidence in the bank was shaken, and a run on the bank may have been averted only because the bank was nationalised.

In the present situation, PSB is operating on razor-thin profit margins, with bank Chairman Mohinder Singh dismissing any question of the bank stashing away secret reserves. "We find it hard enough to make any profits at all," he said. PSB recorded profits last year of no more than Rs 50.7 lakh on advances of Rs 523 crore. Leading bankers insist that, like PSB, there are other banks too with no secret profits.

Even the overall profitability of the banking system could be under pressure now because of a series of government steps in the last couple of years. First, the interest rates on deposits was raised further, with additional increases for deposits by non-residents. Then, the Government raised the interest rate on its new securities—a step that immediately resulted in the old securities depreciating in value and causing the banks considerable book losses. Third, the Government this year lowered the maximum lending rate from 19.5 to 18 per cent.

Vergheese of NIBM also argues that foreign banking could be far less profitable in the future than it has been in the past. The cost of funds has increased, the global recession has caused a string of bankruptcies (some of them involving clients of Indian banks), and "Indian banks will have to re-assess the profit potential of their international operations," she says.

Both the RBI and the bankers themselves are now waking up to the problems overtaking the country's banking system. Some, like R.P. Goyal, SBI chairman, have made it their prime duty to try and put the banks' housekeeping in order, making surprise visits to the branches and emphasising the importance of following all the procedures laid down: the proper introduction of new customers, the completion of all the formalities before giving loans, the importance of avoiding common practices like over-writing in ledgers (which makes frauds easy). The chief vigilance officers of the major banks were summoned recently for a meeting on fresh steps to check frauds, the RBI has opened a new cell to take care of just this problem, and new circulars have gone out to all



"Foreign operations are now the single largest source of profits for Bank of Baroda."

—A.C. Shah, general manager, Bank of Baroda

the banks on ways of preventing losses.

Specialised Banks: But more clearly called for if some of the trends are to be arrested. Baluja thinks it may be a good idea to stop seeing growth for a couple of years, concentrate on getting accounts into the setting the house in order. S. Padmanabhan, deputy managing director of SBI, suggests that there may be a need to create specialised banks for specialised banking. "Nowhere else in the world a bank manager have such a wide responsibility," he says, and argues that in Japan there could be special banks for the credit needs of small-scale industries and yet others for dairying and housing (as in the US and Canada). A beginning has been made in this direction with the setting of regional rural banks in the mid-80s but more such institutions may be set up.

Bankers also repeatedly stress the need to mechanise and computerise banking and clearing operations. Says Talwar, "The problem with Indian banking is manual banking." Once again, some progress can now be made because of the experiments hammered out with bank trade clearing a couple of months ago for computerised bank clearing operations and other transactions. But this may fall short of what is required, which is a total plan to computerise routine accounting so that the enormous volume of transactions can be handled without constantly falling into arrears, books balanced at the end of each day should be the case but isn't.

There then remains the much bigger problem of banking having been postponed over the years. The bankers themselves have no solutions to offer on this, which is a matter for the Government to consider. Clearly, the enormous money power represented by the banks' deposits of Rs 52,000 crore demands the strengthening of the existing checks and balances against its use, lest a central authority use its power to play around with such vast sums. E. S. Lohian suggests what could be a first step: subjecting the banks to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General, which would automatically bring the banks under the scrutiny of Parliamentary bodies and the Public Accounts Committee, and subject to examination by the Committee on Undertakings.

Bankers do not always see eye to eye on all these suggestions, but they are all agreed that unless correctives are introduced and pushed through in short order, the country's banking system could soon be placed under an intolerable strain.

—T.N. NINAN and CHANDER UDAS
and PRABHU

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AIRPORT

Down in Dum Dum

the best airport in the country. It is equipped, it is beautifully designed, a far better place than Palam or "Cruz." That is V. Mani of Air-India eloquent on the subject of Calcutta. Yes, but facts are facts: only 12 international flights operate from the airport and the only one to originate from Calcutta is the Air-India Wednesday to New York; only nine international flights—including Air-India and Bhutan Air—which compares poorly with the 31 using Bombay and the 21 using London and the international section of the airport, one of the most populous city in India, one of the number two on the industrial index, only four hours out of 24. In fact, says, Air-India has a busier schedule from London and Amritsar.

The depressing fact that international airlines don't very much care for Calcutta's "beautifully designed" airport is made obvious from the situation there on some days, there are yawning gaps between one flight and the next. On Wednesdays, for example, the Indian Airlines flight to Dhaka leaves at 4.20 p.m. and there is no activity until 4.40 p.m. when an Air-India flight leaves, leaving a gap of over seven hours. V. Anand, regional general manager of the International Airports Authority (IAAI): "There is a lot of unutilised space here. I have a staff strength of 950 in rotation and for most of them there is not much to do. I cannot blame them for any simple reason that we cannot provide

them with more work. After all, I can't ask the sweeper to go on sweeping the floors when there is nobody to dirty them."

Lowered Status: Interested persons from Calcutta and the region have, however, felt that the airport's plight was man-made. It was recently the subject of an acrimonious exchange of views between the Tourism and Civil Aviation Ministry, which had brought out a "status report" on the airport's problems, and Niren Ghosh, MP, who sent a rejoinder to the minister, Khursheed Alam Khan. The status paper attributed the decline in Calcutta's international air traffic to, among other things, the higher operational capacity of aircraft engines, which allow them to overfly Calcutta. It also said that the Government could not "exercise any positive control" on airlines' choices of points of call.

Ghosh, writing on behalf of 81 MP's who had submitted a memorandum on the subject last year, dismissed the status paper as so much eyewash. Did technological advancement dictate that only the Calcutta portion of the flight be done away with, he asked and added that, as regards the Government's clout in the matter, foreign carriers had told him confidentially, that being guests in India, "they have perforce to follow the wishes of the Government of India".

He recounted the story of how SAS was forced to wait for four years for permission to fly Copenhagen-Karachi-Calcutta-Singapore—it already flew Copenhagen-Karachi-Calcutta-Bangkok-Manila in 1978. By the

time it got the nod in July 1982, it had already withdrawn its flights. He pointed out that British Airways had consistently shifted flights from Calcutta to Delhi and had recently reduced its twice-a-week service to once a week.

Diminished Traffic: But the point that British Airways and other carriers seek to make by shifting their Jumbos from Calcutta to Delhi or Bombay is that there is just not enough business in Calcutta. British Airways, in fact, is even now thinking of closing down its Calcutta office. Ten years ago, when the airport served 40 international flights a week, Air France, Lufthansa, Pan Am and Swissair were all present. Now, of the big names, only British Airways and SAS operate.

Statistics collected by the IAAI show that there was an increase of about 18,000 people in the number of passengers who boarded international flights from Calcutta between April and October this year over the corresponding period last year. British Airways, SAS and the IAAI dismiss this as of "no significance". Says Anand: "This increase is certainly not a trend. It can be attributed to various temporary causes."

Anand refutes the suggestion that the airlines have been persuaded to delete Calcutta from their schedules. Says he: "As per the bilateral system you cannot stop a foreign airline from operating from Calcutta if it so desires. In that case the country to which the airline belongs can also make things difficult for Air-India. And no airlines have come to me saying that they were being denied permission to operate from Calcutta or expand services here."

Vanishing Business: According to travel agencies, about 250 people from Calcutta board international flights from Bombay or Delhi every month. Roy Biswas of the Travel Corporation of India says: "The number of passengers is not so big as to attract international companies to operate more flights on a regular basis." He does complain, though, that his company has to organise its package tours—about 12 between May and September, each tour consisting of about 40 persons—from Bombay or Delhi "because of the paucity of flights here".

Ironically, a new domestic lounge is in the pipeline and when that comes up the present structure will house only the international section. Admits Anand: "If the new terminal building comes up and traffic remains as usual then I will be surrounded by an even bigger emptiness all around." Mani says that they have plans for Calcutta and hope "the day returns when this place again becomes the busiest airport in the nation". If the diminishing whine of jet engines at Calcutta is any indication that day is not going to come for a long time. — SUMANTA SEN



The international lounge at Calcutta airport: not enough business

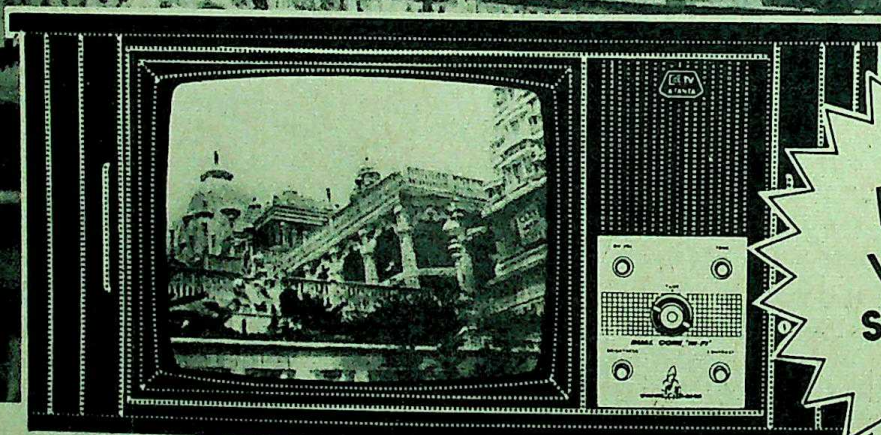
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BUSINESS

CONCEPTS

Sexy Shades

ED ISN'T any longer the only colour of passion. It's black, pink, green, violet, red and, if you've been looking at recent advertisements, "sub-zero". In fact, the sex life of adult Indians seems definitely beyond the pale—ever since the advent of multicoloured luxury condoms. But the hues and ahs that accompany the first flush of lush libidos, is now shared with a few cries as well. As the market business of condoms gets keener, the Government has leapt into the fray to look for the gold at the end of the rainbow.

MADRAS-based company, London Rubber Company (India) of the T.T. Ramachari and Sons Group for short—in a joint venture with the British London Rubber Company, was the first to enter the market in 1979 with the "pink" condom. This was to be such a success that the company's Joint Managing Director T.T. Vasu likens its arrival to the coming of the pink "haute couture". It was followed in 1981 with Fiesta—the name for all-colour condoms. An aggressive sales campaign made the sheath a household name. The blurb in the advertisement made the young "haute couture" melt in sex. It was followed by a massive advertising programme: with the first February of their 150

pieces a year plant in Aurangabad. In 1982, the company was adding substantially to its existing 225 million pieces a year plant in Pallavaram on the outskirts of Chennai. 25 per cent of which are in colour. **Colours:** But TTK's Aurangabad plant has been out of work since as a result of the Union Government's dropping condom orders from private sector companies, a fact that has been disturbing manufacturers like London Rubber. Instead, the Government has been pushing the public sector Hindustan Latex Ltd. based in Kerala and importing condoms from Korea. But HLL's installed capacity is only 288 million pieces a year. As manufacturers of Nirodh they produce nearly 70 per cent of the country's condoms and contraceptive sheaths. The company has been showing such good profits (Rs 1.5 crore in 1981-82 which they hope to reach Rs 1 crore in 1982-83) that two new condom producing plants are on their way to the production of lubricated

condoms for the elite market. And now HLL has also decided to change colours.

Krishna Kumar, an IAS officer-turned-Congress (I) politician who is chairman of HLL has recently placed an order for 10 million colour condoms under open general licence (OGL) from Japan. To be marketed from January next, most probably under the brand name of Moods, HLL's marketing campaign will cut out sexual suggestion and, according to Kumar, emphasise affection, closeness and subtle emotion. "TTK was just importing coloured condoms from England, repacking them as Fiesta, and selling them through provocative and crude advertising," says Kumar.

HLL will do exactly the same, though Kumar stresses that its selling campaign in a sexually conservative country will be low-key and inoffensive. Moreover, he is proud



to point out that his company's new sheaths will be "ultra-thin, lubricated and perfumed with musk oil". Vasu of TTK is not to be outdone. He admits that the Fiesta campaign is being toned down because some people found it vulgar but he says that his endeavour is to upgrade his product.

Vasu admits candidly that "colour is only a gimmick" which was suggested by his principals, London Rubber of Britain. But there may well be more to it than that. Women of different nationalities apparently have distinct colour prejudices. French women, for instance, are said to favour pink. Swedish women, by contrast, have a fancy for black, and at one time a condom named Black Jack, with an irresistible slogan—Black Jack never lets you down—was doing roaring business there.

Vasu adds that one of the ideas behind introducing attractive colours "is to induce couples to perform in the light." And with London Rubber in a mood for light fun there is no telling where they will stop.

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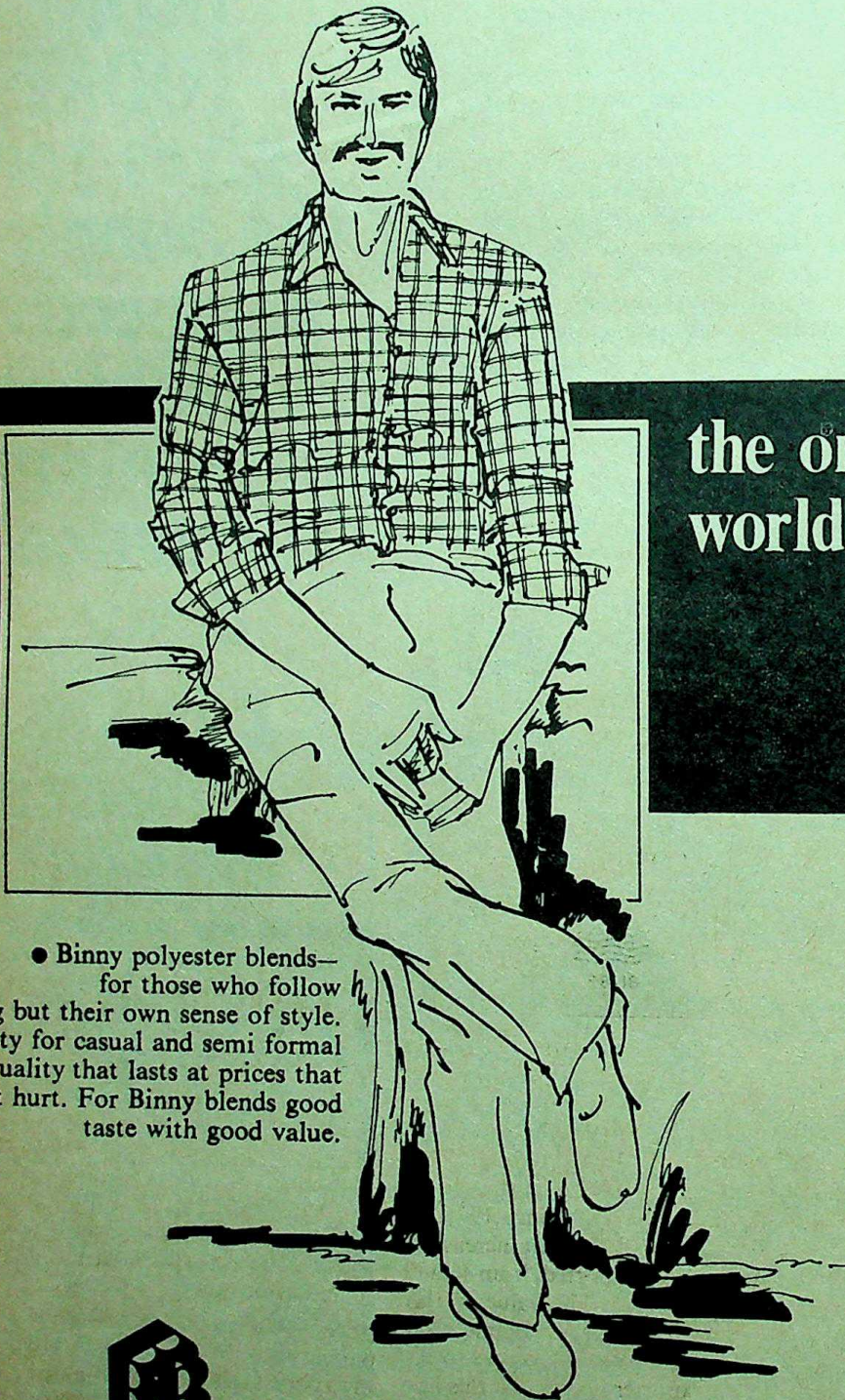
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Dangerous Dependence

KERALA'S seafood industry accounts for the bulk of the country's seafood exports of Rs 361 crore. But 85 per cent of this accrues from the export of shrimp, most of which is marketed in Japan. Dangerous dependence on one product in a single market was rammed home with effect two months ago, and has led to heart-searching by exporters and official agencies regarding the future of the country's marine exports.

September saw Japan shutting its doors to shrimp exports from India, in response to a sharp increase in prices to an all-time high of Rs 100 per kg. Overnight, the entire shrimp industry was crippled. Dismayed exporters, their processing plants overflowing with unsold shrimp, turned away fishermen

Indian shrimp. But with repeated problems with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) over the salmonella content in Indian shrimp, this market soon evaporated. Exporters have found a way around this by selling shrimp to western Europe, which repackages the shrimp for the US market. But off-take is limited, and Japan now provides the main sustenance for the mass-employment industry.

As the recent events have shown, the Japanese market too is unreliable. There have been problems earlier too, because prices have tended to get squeezed whenever the yen becomes weak and importers offer lower quotations in order to compensate for the lower buying power of the currency. And with costs of fuel, the maintenance charges

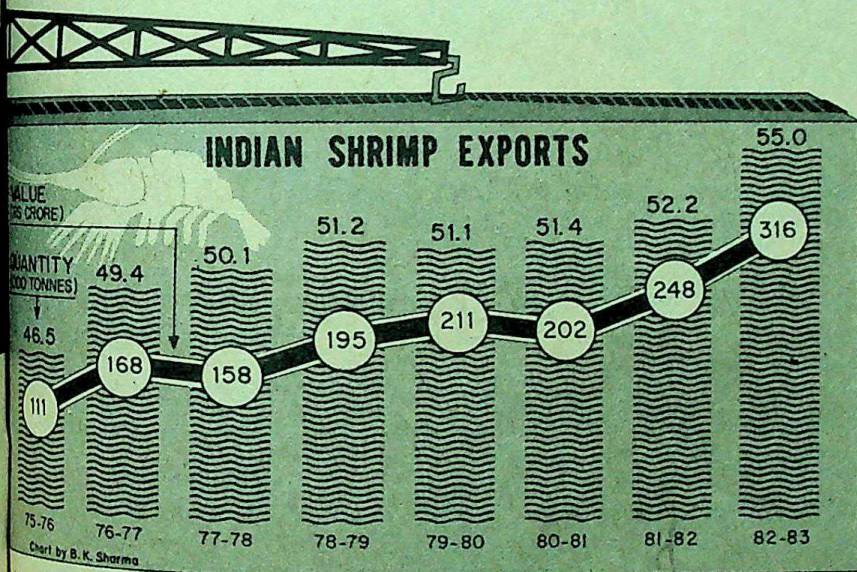
Cherian feels strongly that the Government should exert itself more to get the US ban on Indian shrimp lifted, and thereby provide the country with a second large market.

But even this would not solve the entire problem. For one thing, the country does not have a brand image overseas—a point highlighted by an official task force that looked at the problem recently. As a solution, the task force suggested joint ventures with international firms which could then help in the processing and marketing of marine products. This is badly needed, because the export of canned shrimp has in fact been registering a steady decline: from almost 2,000 tonnes a decade ago to no more than 65 tonnes last year.

While an international association of the sort suggested by the task force might help, Cherian warns that competition will shortly intensify in the global market, with other countries like Mexico, Thailand and even Pakistan becoming forces to contend with.

On the other hand, the task force had offered some reason for optimism: Japan is in the market for Indian shrimp only because local production there is unable to meet demand. This, the task force felt, would result in a virtual doubling of prices for shrimp in the next couple of years—holding out the promise of much higher profits in the future. But no international market will witness a prolonged shortage of supply, and Cherian makes a valid point that unless India's shrimp export industry is put on a professional basis and encouraged to develop rapidly, the competitors in other countries could end up stealing the bacon.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI in Cochin



the nearly 3 lakh people engaged in business in various stages of financial distress. The shrimp price crashed to Rs 100 per kg and the exporters searched desperately for alternative markets, with little success. And to add to the panic, the state government announced a power cut. With Rs 100 worth of frozen shrimp at stake, exporters were in a pretty pickle, and were helped by the Marine Products Export Promotion Authority (MPEDA), which was hit from the power cut and offered its sophisticated cold storage facilities in Cochin.

Vulnerable Position: Happy days returned enough when Japan re-entered the market, but the instability in that country got depleted the cushion of a diversified market, and the US was the main buyer of

for trawlers, wages and other expenses rising, the business has become increasingly chancy. Not many new trawler owners or fishermen have been very enthusiastic about going in for intensive shrimp fishing.

The results now show up in the official statistics of shrimp exports. Since 1975-76, there has been only a 20 per cent increase in the quantity of shrimp exported, from 46,489 tonnes to 55,002 tonnes. The value of this export has increased disproportionately in the same period, from Rs 110.6 crore to Rs 316.2 crore, but exporters claim that this has not been commensurate with the increase in costs over the same period.

Efforts Urged: The message has now begun to hit home. C. Cherian, president of the Seafood Exporters Association of India, calls the dependence on Japan "suicidal", and a spokesman of MPEDA said: "We are at the mercy of the Japanese importers." Che-

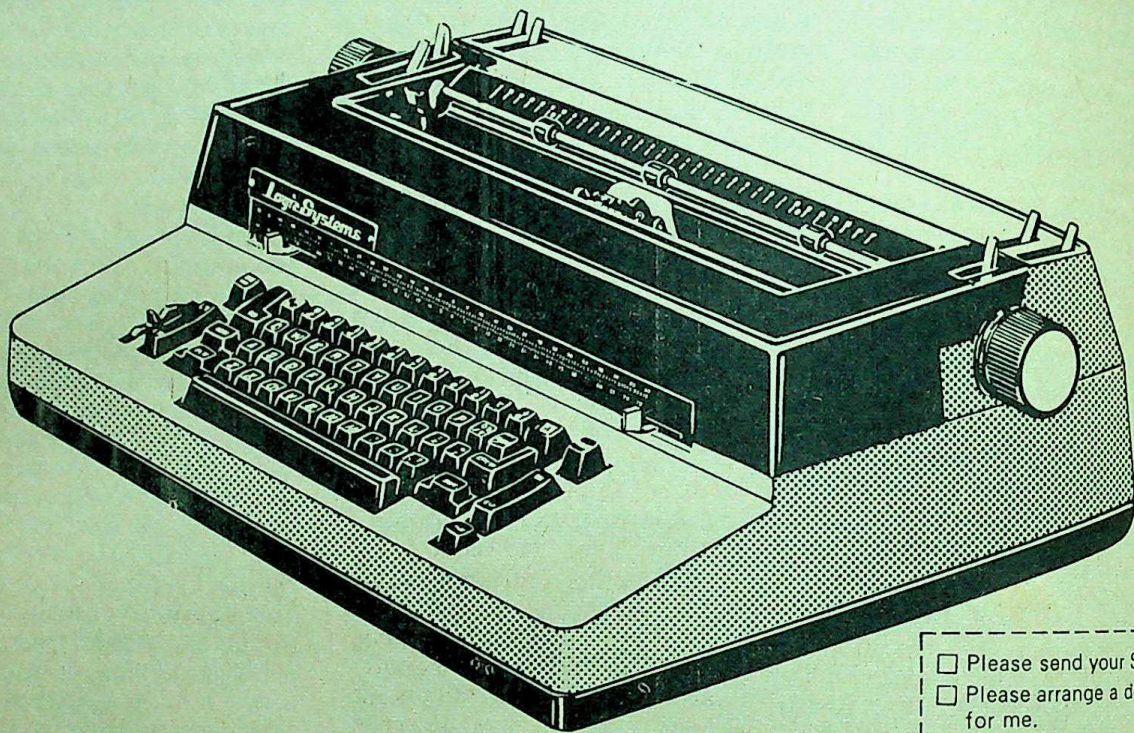
THE MARKETS

Listless Mood

THE MARKETS do not know whether they are coming or going, being pulled this way or that, sometimes by the bears which seem to be active once again, and now and then by the bulls which are still left out in the cold. Actually, the market is waiting to absorb developments which are at the moment beyond its ken, and to which there can be no quick answers.

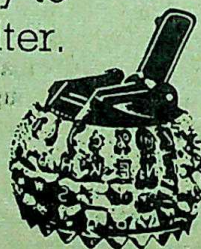
Firstly, there is the question of rising prices. After a brief lull, they have apparently resumed their climb. Inflation is not always bad for share prices in the short run, but can be fatal over the long haul. There is evidence that inflation has begun biting into profits—Tisco's first half year's results are said to be not up to expectations—and might seriously upset corporate plans if it continues unabated. Secondly, the overall climate for industry is none too bright, despite the fact that there is renewed hope on

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PUNE—33/38, Bharat Kunj Co-operative Housing Society, Erandawana, Ph. 56624, **AHMEDABAD**—2, Relief Shopping Centre, Near
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8 Camac Street, Ph. 434427 & 209 WEBEL Industrial Estate, P-1 Taratolla Road, Ph. 771376, **PATNA**—Nandan, East Boring Road,
Ph. 23756, **BHUBANESHWAR**—640, Shaheednagar, Ph. 53492, **GAUHATI**—Pragati Path, Rajgarh Road.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1983	Low 18.11.83	Close 18.11.83	Change on Fortnight
Chemicals	147.50	120.00	122.50	1.50
Coal	37.65	29.50	32.00	nil
Cement	44.00	29.00	44.00	2.00
Crude Oil	461.50	325.00	376.50	(25.00)
India Cement	35.00	25.00	34.50	6.00
India Steel	1,800.00	990.00	1,495.00	(75.00)
India Tea	48.00	37.40	47.50	3.00
India Textiles	312.00	210.00	245.00	(18.00)
India Sugar	32.60	18.05	32.25	0.65
India Paper	62.20	46.10	59.75	(2.45)
India Fertilisers	74.50	38.00	44.50	3.00
India Engineering	96.00	57.50	62.00	(2.00)
India Industries	36.45	23.75	28.00	0.25
India Bond	34.70	26.00	34.00	1.30
India Agro	285.00	195.00	255.00	5.00
India Spinning	890.00	695.00	857.50	(7.50)
India India	67.65	45.00	46.50	0.25
India of India	27.50	1.50	26.87	0.25
India	99.00	8.00	96.00	nil
India	30.50	23.00	30.50	2.00
India	105.50	32.31	86.75	2.75
India Agro	209.00	135.00	209.00	9.00
India India	28.40	20.00	24.60	0.60
India Hotels	29.00	20.00	27.25	0.50
India Engineering	35.00	29.00	35.00	1.00
India	82.87	39.75	66.75	5.00
India Chemicals	91.50	50.50	70.00	8.25
India	31.50	20.00	21.70	(0.80)
India	29.00	17.00	20.50	(0.50)
India Williams	23.00	18.00	21.25	(1.75)
India Rayon	52.50	44.00	52.50	0.75
India Aluminium	46.60	32.10	42.75	(3.85)
India	71.50	51.75	48.58	(1.25)
India Motors	38.14	26.40	38.14	1.54
India Aluminium	25.10	16.25	24.20	(0.55)
India Explosives	27.70	22.00	27.60	0.30
India Organic	35.00	25.50	29.00	(1.00)
India Oxygen	36.50	30.40	36.30	(0.20)
India Rayon	86.00	62.50	66.0	(5.00)
India	44.85	31.50	33.50	(1.50)
India Tea	41.40	20.35	41.00	(0.40)
India Chemicals	57.50	32.00	44.90	(2.90)
India	93.00	70.00	93.00	0.50
India	68.10	55.80	61.90	3.40
India Engineering	163.00	68.00	123.00	5.00
India Oil	28.00	13.25	24.75	(0.25)
India (Madras)	25.25	16.25	23.50	1.00
India T. T. Siro	73.00	52.00	71.00	(2.00)
India	27.30	14.00	27.25	1.75
India	90.00	40.00	80.00	(4.00)
India	23.25	15.30	21.60	(0.15)
India & Mahindra	66.00	42.00	56.50	(3.00)
India	35.37	22.69	25.00	(0.50)
India	292.50	220.00	232.50	2.50
India	55.00	36.00	55.00	nil
India Organic	207.50	156.25	162.50	1.25
India	51.00	40.20	49.70	0.70
India	376.00	229.00	244.00	(2.00)
India	46.00	36.00	41.00	0.50
India	65.00	36.50	60.00	nil
India	183.00	100.00	106.50	1.50
India	34.50	19.00	34.00	0.38
India	47.50	22.20	47.50	4.20
India	41.50	27.75	32.37	(0.38)
India	28.25	15.25	24.25	(0.75)
India	49.00	38.30	49.00	2.50
India	67.00	49.50	57.75	(1.25)
India	322.50	234.50	236.50	(29.00)
India	455.00	390.00	398.00	(5.00)
India	59.00	38.00	57.50	1.50
India	19.05	16.00	17.90	1.00
India	25.75	21.50	26.60	3.10
India	26.50	22.00	22.00	(1.50)
India	365.00	262.00	362.00	35.00
India	36.75	22.40	36.75	1.10
India	14.10	12.25	13.30	nil

the foodgrains front.

Thirdly, the talk of general elections is adding to uncertainty. There is always a chance that things will be more uncertain after the elections than they are today, in which case the market will crash even further, for if there is anything the marketmen cannot bear, it is uncertainty, not bad news. And, finally, of course, there is the annual budget now due in about eight weeks' time, and eight weeks is a long time in the stock-market.

Future Fears: There are many who think that the cheerful mood that prevailed during Diwali was not genuine and was in fact artificially built up by the financial institutions in order to prevent a selling wave following the recent take-over of sick textile mills in Bombay. The institutions, their work done, have apparently withdrawn on orders from the powers that be, and the markets have now to fend for themselves. The institutions might step in again, in which case there will almost certainly be a small upward turn in prices, but there are limits to such interventions, particularly when industrial production is not going up as rapidly as it should and there are fears of a slump.

Considering all this, the markets have not done too badly. Most fertiliser shares are doing well and are close to the year's high and may go up even further. Food Specialities and Shaw Wallace have gained, and so have Ceat and Hindustan Motors, the latter on reports of a collaboration agreement for a new vehicle. Oswal Agro has made something of a quantum jump and the price has more than doubled in less than two months. These scrips are worth watching as is everything that swims against the stream.

The market will not recover until the engineering shares start looking up, and there is no sign of that yet. In fact, the general feeling is that although in some sectors there are signs of an upturn, it will be some time before this spreads on to the rest of the economy. The pick-up in the farm sector does not seem to have helped matters much. Food prices are still high, far too high considering everything, and are probably a big factor in the current uncertain mood in the market.

But there is always a silver lining and new issues are said to be doing well although most of the new issues pertain to companies that are already in operation. Another piece of good news is that non-residents are once again in the picture with substantial business reported on that front. There is no lack of money at home either, with the banks reporting record deposits. All in all, therefore, the current listless mood is almost certainly temporary, a short pause before the next big leap. When that will be, only God—and politicians—may be in a position to know.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates (Rs)	TT Buying Rates (Rs)
Australia	1 As \$	9.4763	9.3785
Austria	100 As Sch	55.2495	54.6737
Bahrain	1 Dinar	27.6148	27.4071
Bangladesh	100 Taka	41.8520	41.5372
Canada	1 Can \$	8.4898	8.4027
Denmark	1 D Kr	1.0774	1.0651
Egypt	1 Egg £	12.5217	12.4275
France	1 Fr Frc	1.2778	1.2647
Hong Kong	1 Hk \$	1.3426	1.3287
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0522	1.0443
Iran	100 Rial	11.9277	11.8380
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6450	0.6388
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.4660	4.4181
Kenya	1 K. Shilling	0.7665	0.7607
Kuwait	1 Dinar	35.5706	35.3030
Malaysia	1 Ml \$	4.4755	4.4262
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.8439	0.8575
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.7260	0.7206
Netherlands	1 D Glds	3.4692	3.4339
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.7943	0.7883
Singapore	1 Sing \$	4.9206	4.8662
Spain	100 Sp Pt	6.7894	6.7272
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4254	0.4222
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.3224	1.3080
Switzerland	1 Sw Frc	4.8061	4.7577
Tanzania	1 T Sch	0.8509	0.8445
Thailand	100 Baht	45.1406	44.4554
UK	1 Pound	15.3870	15.2485
USA	1 US \$	10.4950	10.3550
UAE	1 Dirham	2.8259	2.8047
USSR	1 Rouble	13.5331	13.4372
W. Germany	1 DM	3.8851	3.8462

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd. New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 22nd November '83.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index*		
November 18, 1983	276.8	4.6
Cereals	251.9	5.7
Chemicals	338.0	(4.7)
Industrial Fibres	183.4	(0.6)
Metals	372.5	0.1
Sugar	200.7	2.0
Textile Yarn	221.3	0.9
Vegetable Oils	352.4	17.6
Gold, standard,		
November 18, 1983	1,880.00	20.00
(Rs per 10 gm)		
Silver, .999		
November 18, 1983	3,600.00	(60.00)
(Rs per kg)		
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
November 18, 1983	271.2	5.9
Cement	249.1	(3.8)
Chemicals	213.0	12.6
Engineering	476.3	13.5
Fertilisers	235.9	15.4
Man-made Fibres	417.8	6.1
Paper	541.3	30.8
Rubber Goods	178.7	5.6
MONEY		(per cent)
Money Supply, October 21, 1983	1.8	
Bank Deposits	1.3	
Foreign Exchange Assets	7.9	

* 1969-70 = 100

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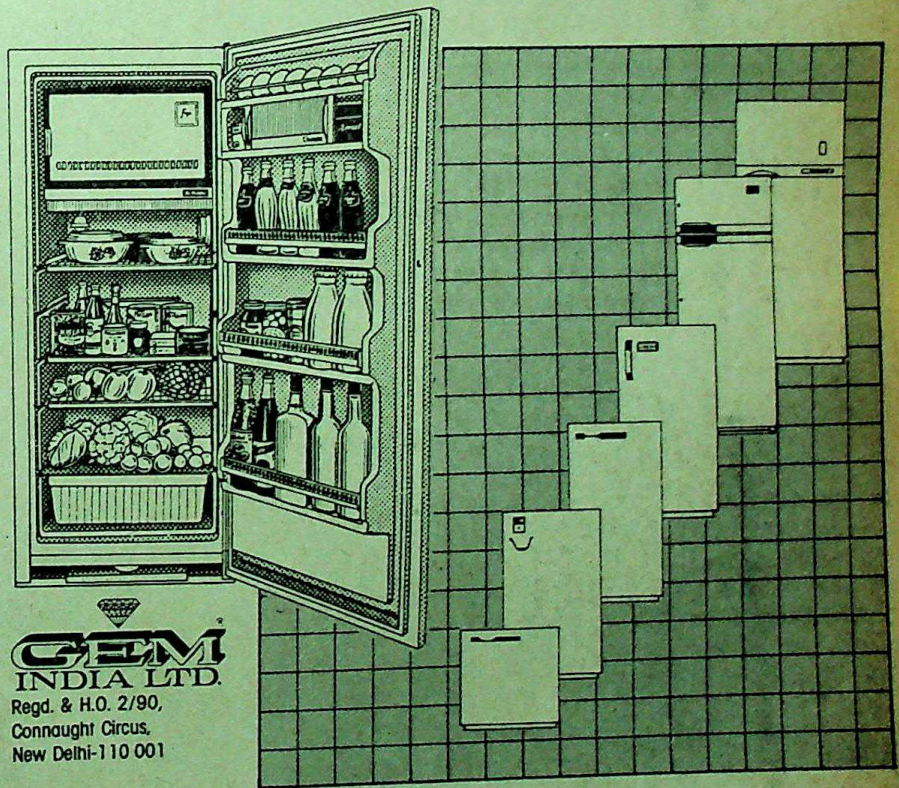
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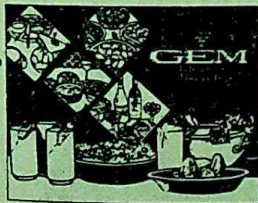
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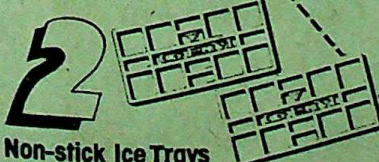
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UMPIRING

On a Sticky Wicket



A UNIQUE feature of the last Indian tour of the West Indies early this year was that unlike most tours in Test cricket, it was wholly free of rows and recriminations over the umpiring. Not so with the current tour. It is no secret that the West Indies were grossly dissatisfied with the umpiring in the second test at Delhi, a match in which an Indian batsman Dilip Vengsarkar also expressed dissent after being given out caught behind. Yet, when asked for a comment on the quality of umpiring at their post-match press conference, Clive Lloyd spoke in terms sympathetic to the umpires. "When two men stand out there for five days," he said, "they are bound to make mistakes."

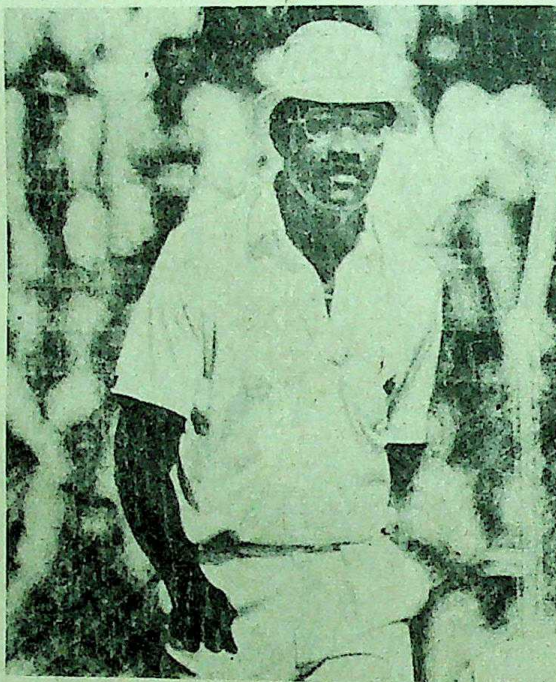
However, in Ahmedabad, after only two days' play, Lloyd, in an article published under his name in a Calcutta daily, attacked the umpires in the most scathing manner. "Rao (Hanumanta) and Ramaswamy are the worst umpires I have seen. I am fed up with all this nonsense. I hope this is the last I have seen of them," he stormed and in his article went on to say that in his report to the Indian Board he was strongly recommending that the two umpires never be allowed to depute against the West Indies. It is impossible to condone the physical assaults on umpires by Richard Hadlee and Colin Croft—Hadlee flung a bail at an umpire in 1976 in Madras, and Croft shoulder-charged New Zealand's leading umpire, Fred Goodall a few seasons later—and the Gavaskar walk-off for which he at least has had the good grace to apologise, or Lloyd's criticism of the umpires in print. But that is not to say that there was no cause for grievance.

Strong Steps: Cricket authorities the world over have taken every step to either improve the standard of umpiring or ensure that the best available umpires stand in Test matches.

In the West Indies in 1971, the Indians expressed the view that Douglas Sang Hue and Ralph Gosein were umpires of outstanding ability and the West Indies Board appointed them for as many Tests as they could without causing friction between themselves and the various territorial umpires associations. Similarly, in 1983, manager Hanumant Singh told the West Indies Board that his team had great faith in David Archer and they in turn were happy to provide Archer's services in four of the five Tests.

Now, the West Indies have equal

respect for Swaroop Kishen who stood in the first Test at Kanpur. "The big fella", as the West Indies players call him, is rated by them as one of the "best umpires in the world". If indeed the West Indies have so much confidence in him why does not the Board appoint him for all the remaining Test matches, specially when on more than one tour the West Indies Board has accommodated us as best



"Rao and Ramaswamy are the worst umpires I have seen. I am fed up with all this nonsense. I hope this is the last I have seen of them."

—Clive Lloyd

they could? I posed this question to S. Sriraman, senior vice-president of the Board and chairman of the umpires subcommittee. He replied that "while the playing conditions make provisions for captains to object to umpires backed by specific instances of incompetence, they cannot specify which umpire should stand. We feel we have other umpires who are equally competent and must also get their chances."

Sriraman is no doubt sincere in his belief but if Swaroop Kishen's burly presence at all the Test matches is to make for more efficient umpiring and more congenial cricket

then Sriraman should put greater emphasis on negotiation and cooperation with the rule book. He denies that there were any complaints against any Indian umpire by the England team that toured here two years ago or that the West Indies have taken any objection to the umpiring in any match of the tour. He did add, however, that he was awaiting their report on the Ahmedabad Test.

Different Era: There is not a single journalist in India or elsewhere who would hold Sriraman in esteem and admiration. Efficient men are usually cold but Lloyd got to call him in Australia is a friendly, helpful and possessing a good sense of humour. It was painful, therefore, during our conversation on the subject of umpiring furore he should have expressed press and no one else for all the controversies that have cropped up in the last few years.

Those of us who came into the game in an era of better taste and with a more restrained temperament was less brash, operated for years on the premise that the "umpire's decision is final" and that being placed in a position where we could not comment on the decision. Indeed, we still do not pass judgement on controversial decisions but we do ignore mentioning them when a pair of eyes in the stands have been turned to a player indicating disagreement when the incident has been reported around the world by television. It is only by a re-examination in slow motion that the fault lies firstly with the umpire.

The fault lies firstly with the umpire that appoints umpires who are inexperienced and therefore so lacking in self-confidence that they are overwhelmed by the flattery and deceived by forceful and impulsive appeals and undermined by the persistent expressions of dissatisfaction that follow their decisions. In other words, they crack under circumstances which modern sportsmen scribe as "pressure". There is not a single umpire in the world who does not make mistakes, not even the celebrated Bird of England, Archer of the West Indies or our own Swaroop Kishen. We know it and so do the players. What is the definition of a good umpire? He is the one who makes the fewest errors and controls the game with firmness and in a cordial manner.

To anyone who aspires to become a Test umpire I hold up two English examples. They are John Langford and Lloyd Budd. They are both over 70 and have hung up their white coats. But more than once these venerable gentlemen have been brought out of retirement at the insistence of the cricketers who respected their judgement and at the same time regarded them as benevolent uncles.

[illegible]

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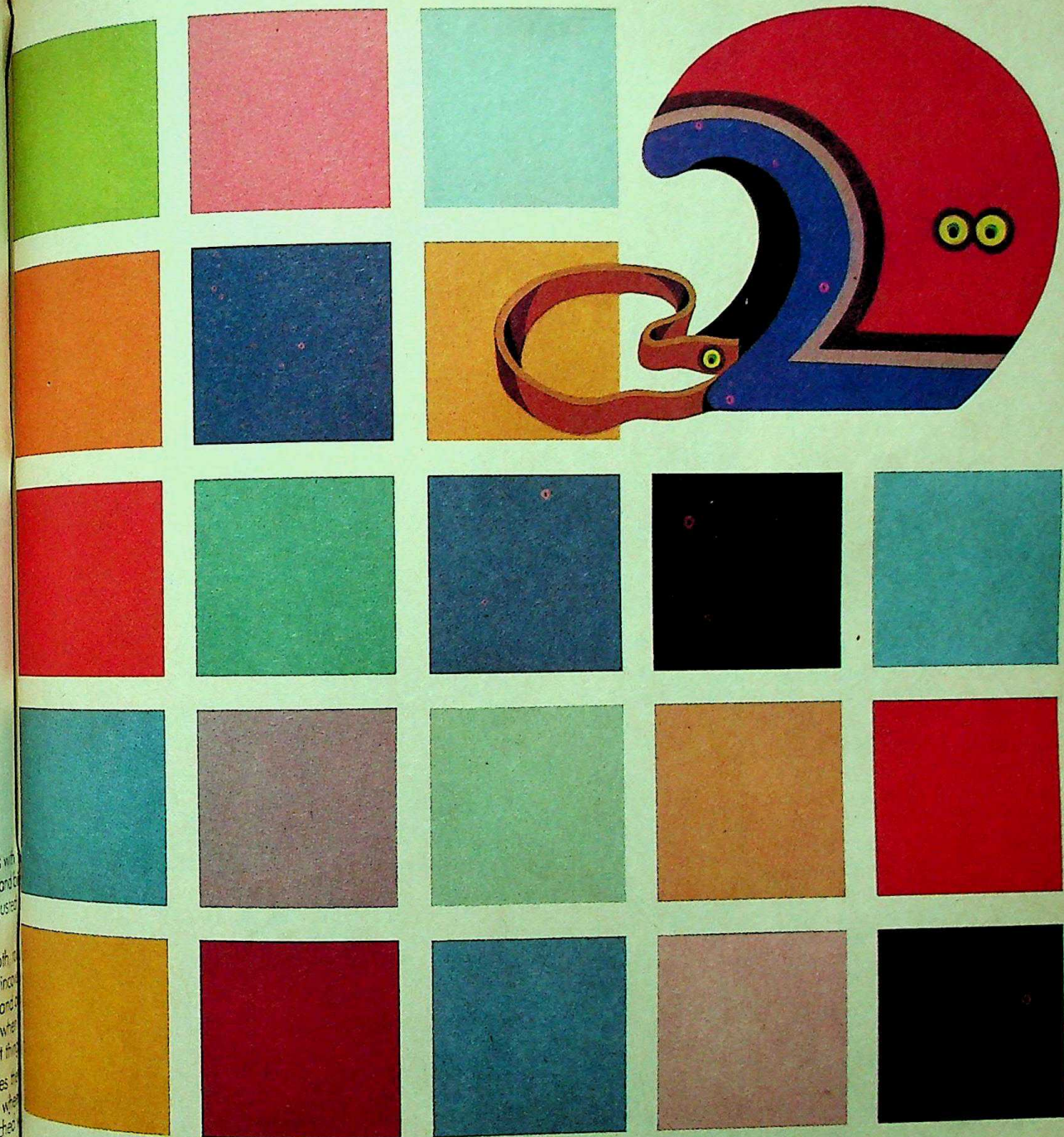
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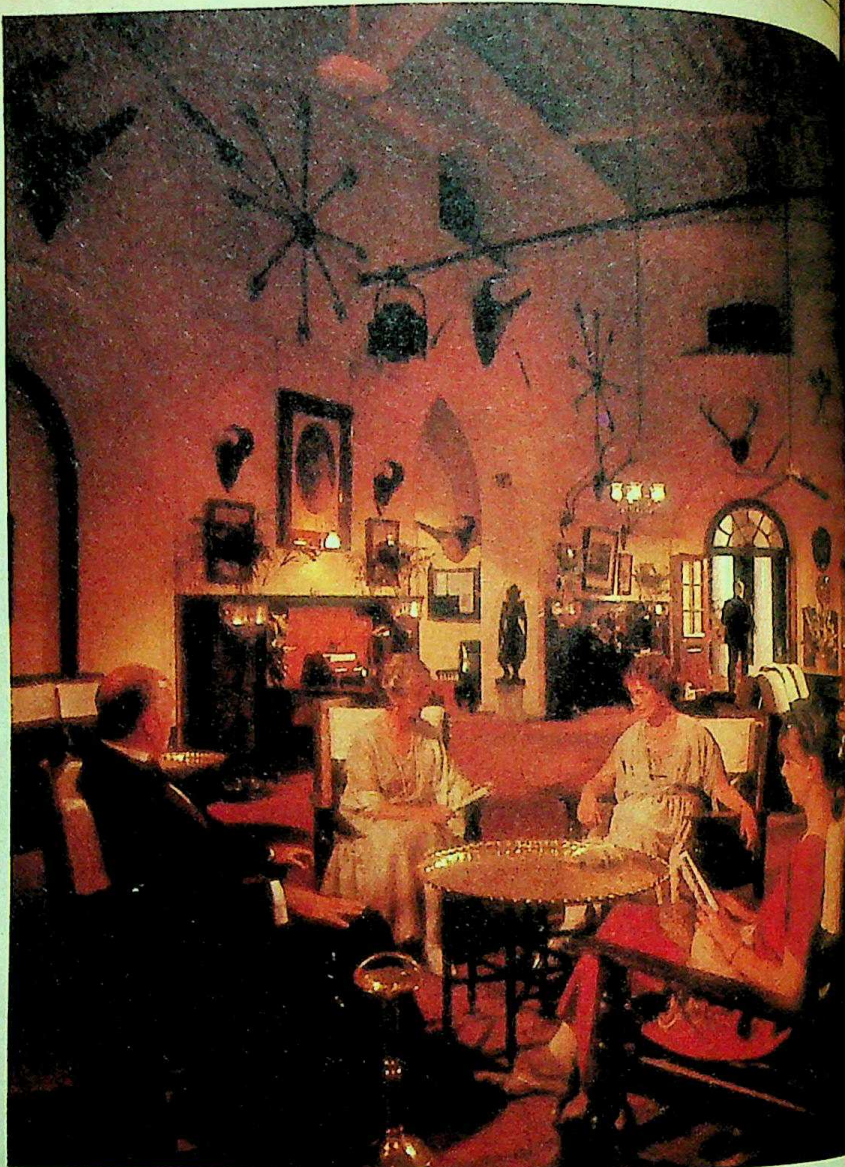
Lean's Passage

PEOPLE were beginning to call it "Lean's Passage", in uncharitable reference to the director's advancing years and the excruciating delays that mark the passage of his movies. But 60 years after E.M. Forster's novel was published, and 14 years after David Lean's last movie *Ryan's Daughter* was released, *A Passage to India* was coming to life last fortnight at the Bangalore Club in Bangalore. A peach-coloured 1920s Buick flying the Union Jack stood in the porch. Turbaned waiters helped withering memsahibs off gleaming gharries. Dinner-jacketed Englishmen in stiff collars—the insufferable Turtens and McBrydes from the novel's Civil Lines—suffocated silently under the glare of arc lamps. The club's interior had been dressed in meticulously stuffy imitation of the Chandrapore Club, down to the letter paper on the writing desks and the hunting trophies on the walls.

Locations for the more ominous Marabar Caves of the book were some 45 km away from town—large black holes blasted into the magnificent natural rock formations to be found between Bangalore and Mysore—but the grounds of the former maharaja of Mysore's Bangalore palace were being put to hectic use. At one end was an enormous plaster-and-woodwork set of the main street of Chandrapore's Civil Lines (shuttered colonial bungalows with names like "Homedale" and "Lochard"), at another end was a piece of Bombay dockyard and, further up, the humble abode of Dr Aziz set in a crumbling courtyard. And here, too, were all the imperishable characters who, since their first appearance in 1924 when Forster's novel became an instant best seller, have survived the vicissitudes of the Raj and after to personify the social and psychological breakdown of British rule in India. Here in Bangalore are assembled the wise old Mrs Moore (Dame Peggy Ashcroft), the wan and priggish Adela Quested (Judy Davis), the grievously maligned Dr Aziz (Victor Banerjee), the near-mystic Godbole (Sir Alec Guinness), sympathetic Fielding (James Fox) and benign Hamidullah (Saeed Jaffrey).

Indian connections: Casting *A Passage to India*—expected to cost US \$17.5 million (Rs 17.5 crore), all of it British finance—has, however, been the least of the problems in filming the novel. For years, the problem lay in getting permission from Forster himself (he died in 1970 at the ripe age of 91 with a deep suspicion of the cinema). It was not till 1980 that his literary executors at King's College,

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BHAWAN SINGH



At the Chandrapore Club (above) Dame Peggy Ashcroft as Mrs Moore and Judy Davis as Miss Quested mingle with club gentry and (below) director Lean at work

edge, relented to producer Lord... persuasion to allow the novel to... Interestingly, all the key people... with the filming have an Indian... John Brabourne's father was... of Bombay and Bengal and he... Governor of Bombay and Bengal Mount-... to the present Countess Mount-... of Burma, daughter of the late Lord... Mountbatten; Richard Goodwin, the... producer was born in Bombay; and... David Lean has a long-standing asso-... with India which began years ago... moghul Alexander Korda asking... investigate the possibilities of making... the Taj Mahal (it never materialised... an Indian wife).

75, and married for the fourth time... beautiful blonde who drives him around... Mercedes station-wagon with Swiss... plates, Lean looks aged but remains... agile of mind and spirit. "So... John Brabourne rang me up and said... the filming rights and would I like to

of course, I jumped at it," he... on the lawns of the Banga-... his eyes lighting up and en-... bubbling over with the exci-... of a schoolboy breaking... once again. For Lean, it's been... wait to be back in business, and... is a subject after his own... He loved it when he first saw it... play in London 25 years ago, ... involvement with the book... in his holing up in a New... novel for six months last year... the whole screen-play himself... after the intensive drafting and... the shooting script has gone... in his hands, Lean's motiva-... doing *Passage* haven't chan-... they may seem a little old-fashio-... and may have literary pundits... blue murder (for years the... has been a standard college text... and other English-speaking... of the world, and Forster himself... the status of a literary... Lean sees it primarily as ma-... for a very good picture—it's... good plot and some wonderful... I want to make the sort of... people can have a good old... about over dinner after... been to see it."

coming from a man who's argu-... more successes than any other... film maker (between *Brief Encounter*... and *Ryan's Daughter* in 1970 and an... string of block-busters in be-... *Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957),... of *Arabia* (1962) and *Dr Zhivago*... that have together collected 28... such remarks aren't to be treated as

throw-away lines. Nor are the liberties he's taken with Forster's story, which remains controversial as much for what it says as for what it leaves unsaid.

FOR INSTANCE, the dramatic centre of the story remains a big question mark. Known as the Marabar Caves episode, it concerns the molestation of the English Miss Quested, lately arrived in India to marry a young civil servant. For years, the question debated by readers and in classrooms has been: was Miss Quested actually assaulted by Dr Aziz as she alleged? Or did she suffer a hallucination? Forster provided no answers, but wove his complex tale of racial tension around the question, leaving readers to make up their own minds. Partly it was because, so he explained in a letter to a friend during the painfully slow writing of the novel: "I think that most Indians, like most English people, are shits, and I am not interested whether they sympathise one another or not..." and partly because he pro-



Banerjee as Aziz (top) and Davis as Quested: racial flashpoints

bably didn't know the answer himself. Lean says that as a film maker, he is trying to tie up some of the loose ends Forster left— "In movies you don't have loose ends"— and regards it his job to "give people two or three options to work out the story".

Original Treatment: For purposes of cinematic lucidity, he has also added on bits

such as "a short-hand introduction to the Raj at the beginning", and shifted the book's ending to Kashmir where Fielding, the English schoolmaster who befriends Aziz, returns to meet him again and the two renew their friendship. This is a major departure from Forster's famous, antagonistic ending where the hills and temples and birds in the sky echoed that the two could not be friends, implying that as long as the English ruled India the two races would not be compatible either. At the time of its publication, five years after the ghastly Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, it was a powerful and incredibly prescient indictment of the Raj.

Today it is dated, and Lean has felt the need to alter it. But he admits to having left the characters as they are, except for Miss Quested perhaps, whom Forster cast as a typically dreary, dowdy young Englishwoman. "I had to change Adela Quested first of all because young cinema audiences are likely to say, oh what a dreary bitch, and secondly, she has to be attractive otherwise she falls into the come-along-now-dear-and-pull-yourself-together category."

Strong Cast: Judy Davis, the virtually unknown Australian actress playing Miss Quested, an uptight young woman with freckles, was trying to play the part so hard in real life that she was at a loss for words to comment. Dame Peggy Ashcroft, the veteran English actress, "tailor-made" as Lean said for the part of Mrs Moore, was enjoying herself. Sir Alec Guinness and Saeed Jaffrey are not scheduled to arrive till early next year for the shooting that continues till March 1984. But Victor Banerjee, the 37-year-old Calcutta-based actor who won the coveted role of Dr Aziz was bristling with energy and good humour. Having just come out of completing Satyajit Ray's *Ghare Baire*, he thinks it's a "fantastic opportunity" to be able to work with Lean, though it "means zilch for my career, really". Banerjee, who admits to having tried to read *A Passage to India* back in college and giving it up "because it seemed too boring, too contrived", has revised his opinion after reading Lean's script. "It's brilliant," he says.

As for David Lean, he has immersed himself completely in India to resurrect on screen what is easily the best-known novel written about the country by a foreigner. For him, the urge to reach out to the heart of India is perhaps as great as Forster's. Like Forster whose last big creation the novel was, this film might well be Lean's last.

—SUNIL SETHI in Bangalore

The Inside Story

THE MORARJI PAPERS

by ARUN GANDHI

Vision Books

Pages: 256; Price: Rs: 80



THE JANATA Party was less than 30 months old when it committed suicide. When it was founded, it was to be more than a conventional political body; it expected—or at least its supporters did—to evolve a new ethos for a

nation paralysed by the trauma of the Emergency. But it was not to be and the party that was to give birth to a new world, itself fell prey to the diseases of the old.

One of these old men was Morarji Desai who became the country's prime minister but who had little hold over the party that had put him in power. Morarji, of course, behaved as if he owed nothing to his party and was often rather condescending even towards Jayaprakash Narayan who was, according to Desai, junior to him in politics, as if politics was a kind of a bureaucratic game where promotions went by seniority. In the end, Morarji fell out with nearly everyone in the Government and the party, partly because of his own acts of commission and omission but also because there was little to hold the feuding old men, and even some younger ones, together.

Crumbling Government: This book traces the party's slow descent into chaos and eventual collapse through letters and documents exchanged between Desai and his government and party colleagues and since the correspondence has come mainly through Desai's files, the account may seem rather one-sided. However, the documents, truncated versions of which have appeared before from time to time, are available here in full for the first time, and the reader is free to draw his own conclusions about the murky goings-on at several levels which ultimately brought about the Janata Government's downfall.

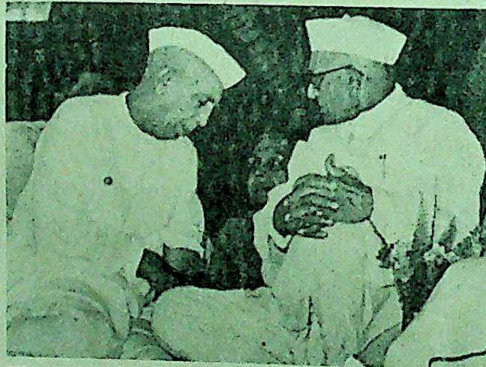
For some reasons that are not clear, Desai is not happy with the way the author has handled his papers but Desai is a notorious nit-picker with a rather over-developed sense of right and wrong but I, for one, do not see how else the matter could have been handled.

The papers make sordid reading. It was clear right from the start that Morarji and

Charan Singh would clash and bring down the Government with them. Unlike bulls on rampage, most politicians steer clear of china shops but Charan Singh apparently carries his own China shop with him. He is needing Morarji all the time about this and that, often taking cudgels on behalf of other cabinet ministers who may have been slighted by Desai. Charan Singh soon becomes an alternative centre of power—and intrigue—within and outside the Government and is seen playing for high stakes through middlemen like Raj Narain and Madhu Limaye.

Unpopular Leader: Unfortunately, Morarji was not successful in isolating Charan Singh and his cabal, for the man was a loner and could not hit it off with anyone. Within less than a year he was on virtually non-speaking terms with nearly everyone, from President Sanjiva Reddy to Acharya Kripalani—who complained loudly that he was not being consulted at all, to which Desai replied that he could not be expected to consult 'all and sundry'—and was slowly painting himself into a corner.

There is not a single letter here from Desai thanking anyone for anything; in fact, there is not a single letter which the man at the other end could have been pleased to receive. Every missive from I, Safdarjung Road



Singh and Desai in 1977: squabbling partners

is a missile, an admonishment in the most severe terms, a ticking-off for this lapse or that, a reprimand, a warning, but not a single pat on the back or a simple thank you note. It is possible that such letters have been withheld as of no consequence, but this is unlikely. Morarji was evidently revelling in a role after his own heart, the role of the *sarvochcha* or godfather—for whom a smile or an act of kindness is a come-down, a surrender. A man who thinks in such terms can hardly lead a panchayat, let alone a nation, and no wonder he failed.

Others do not come out any better either. There is, for instance, Madhu Limaye, a shadowy figure in Indian politics at the best

of times, who is deluging the prime minister's office with letters but scrupulously avoiding a face-to-face meeting with Morarji. On occasions, Morarji invited Limaye to his house or his office and discussed matters personally but Limaye refused to do so, though he was always worked up about something or the other. "You will get no discussion of such issues by correspondence which involves needlessly heavy demands on me," writes at one point, inviting Limaye to a meeting. "This almost pathological refusal of Desai and the refusal to meet him face to face is quite inexplicable," says the author.

Suffering Work: Janata leaders were apparently chronic letter-writers. Cabinet ministers wrote long letters to one another at cabinet meetings where many of them could have been thrashed out over a cup of coffee. The Desai-Fernandes correspondence on the BHEL affair takes up nearly half the book. Advani's letter on Kanti Desai's appointment into government business and the reply are also long-winded. Did the men spend all their time writing and reading such nasty letters to one another and not getting on with their jobs? No wonder work suffered.

In a way, this was inevitable. The leaders could not get on because they did not know what had brought them together in the first place. They failed to recognise the people who had voted for them but they were not so much for a party—as a party was less than a month old when it went to the polls—as for a national movement. They would put back on rails the train of democracy and of course of democracy, but they suddenly met with the disastrous accident of the Emergency. The leaders were expected to do much more than sign on files and pass bills; they were expected to evolve a new ethos of modernisation without which it was virtually impossible for a nation to have a foothold for itself in this changing world.

Instead the Janata leaders had reverted to a form of simplistic Gandhianism that was totally out of line with the situation. The essence of Gandhianism is passivity which, translated in simple terms, is inaction. And during the 800-odd days of the Janata Party rule, that is what the passive rulers offered. If power without responsibility is the prerogative of the ruling class through the ages, power without accountability is the Janata gerontocracy's strange legacy to the nation when it had all the power and the nation was raring to go. Arun Gandhi's book shows how it all happened, in the words of the men seen playing around with words that would ultimately tighten the noose around their necks.

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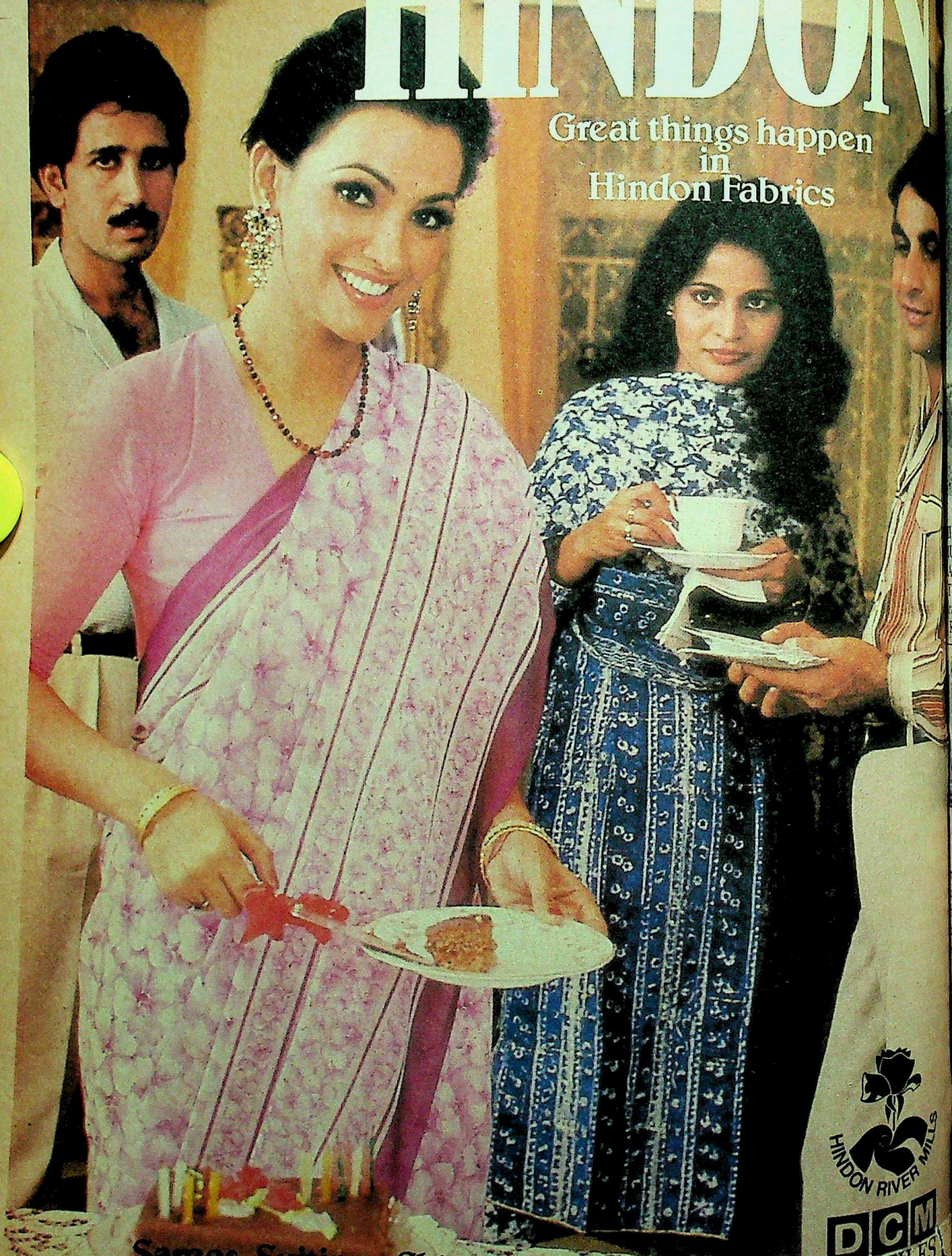


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THE PORTRAIT

KHUSHWANT SINGH
RAGHU RAI

Tourism Development
Edition/Oxford University Press, 1983.
Rs 190

DELHI

KHUSHWANT Singh, Raghu Rai; formidable but strange bedfellows, both with their strong predilections and individual identities. This is not one of those coffee-table books that are ah! so carefully planned, with text and pictures for each other. Think of the James series for instance—*Above Hawaii* and so on. They leave an important physical feature of the place out; and the text fully underscores the omissions—with the right degree of elegance. They are also cold, decorative like overdressed duchesses. Here the individual photographers go their own ways, inspired by their own visions. Singh's text is a uniquely relaxed and refreshing. He writes about Delhi at his fingertips and they speak for themselves. His love for Delhi is embedded in the writing; the reader becomes aware of it only when he has finished reading. At the same time the writing is beginning, a middle and an end. It is impressionistic.

Raghu Rai obviously did not set

out to take photographs in order to make a book on Delhi. In his long and distinguished career as a photographer, he has shot much that he has seen and felt about this city. He has culled the best fruits of his labour and put them into this book. Some of the photographs have appeared before. For this reason, at times, one wishes that some further aspects of Delhi had been specially shot to give the book more unity. The lack of a comprehensive photographic treatment does take away something from the book as the 'portrait' it claims to be. But once you abandon preconceptions and surrender yourself to the individual photographs, the compensations are many. Take the picture of the visitor at the Qutab. Observe the gaunt old bearded Muslim face with its ageless eyes, almost unseen as they peer suspiciously through very modern spectacles at a camera recording Delhi's grandest monument to the Muslim period. It is a great portrait—of centuries compressed into a moment.

Shooting Reality: The shot of Amjad Khan playing sarod at the Red Fort is as amusing as Rai's best black and whites. The soft hues of the monuments in the background and the near silhouettes of the crowd gathered around are as in a Daniel engraving; it is the sarod player who looks incongruous in his studied traditionality, his spectacles reflecting the light paling on the reddish pillars. Rai is hardly ever a formalist in search of patterns—except in the aerial view of Rajpath and such made-to-order pictures. "Saris drying on the banks of the Yamuna" has everything a formalist could

ask for—delicate colours massed in geometric patterns, a grey-blue horizon dividing water and sky of exactly the same hues. Even the silhouette of the shrouded woman forms part of a formal whole, each element supporting the other, until you come to the riderless bicycle standing alone, etched against the water.

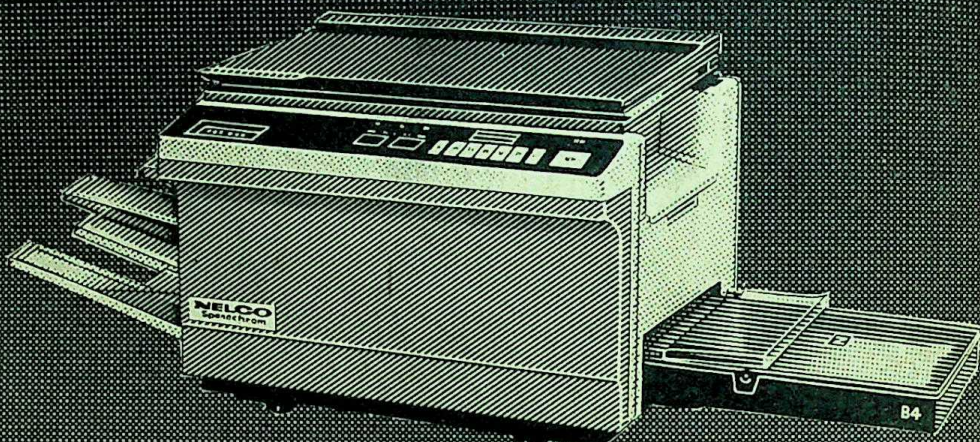
If Raghu Rai is known more for his BW's than his colour work, one can see why, when one comes to the second section. From the grainy, dust laden shot of "Threshing Wheat near Humayun's Tomb" to the "View through the main door of Jama Masjid", the black and whites have a richness of observation.

"Evening Prayer" is a classic, bringing together a vast cityscape with dark clouds billowing over the city with the minaret of the mosque rising to meet the clouds and a lone woman in white offering evening prayer deep inside a house. It is the last picture in the book and possibly its most memorable. It encapsulates the longest period of Delhi's known and yet palpable history—the Muslim period which still evokes the essence of its feeling, behind all the modernity imposed on it in a mere half-a-century. The Muslim tradition had a lofty elegance that is still silhouetted against Delhi's skies; the British tried to add their own imperial grandeur without abolishing the Mughal; and now we have barbarism encrusting both. Like Khushwant Singh, Raghu Rai sees directly into this historicity, and that is the infinity in which their parallel visions meet.

—CHIDANANDA DASGUPTA

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Weaving A Magic Spell

AS decidedly the qualitative high- of the Indian cultural season. From arate and remote textile pockets of "Vishvakarma" last fortnight together master weavers and their a rarely witnessed exhibition of in New Delhi. It proved to be an er for many who thought that ms were dead and synthetics held And more important, for most it a flashback into a glorious past.

ty-seven master weavers, some indi- but most of them representing the 22 s Service Centres, spread over the in Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Bombay si, Kanchipuram and Kanyakumari ed their works in a stunning confluen- aditional weavers, designs. Some of eces on display had formed part of ival of London extravaganza in ed now, under the aegis of Pupul e, the grande dame of Indian hand- the show was revived for Vishvakar-

he New Delhi exhibition was divided o categories: one exclusively dedica- the master weavers of Tamil Nadu du Pava and another, a directory of om other weaving centres of India. ith 12 ft panels in smooth raffia silks, ainted in shades of earthy reds and ens formed the backbone of the ex- dominated by the tree of life motifs. ed for Vishvakarma by the weavers onda through the various weavers the gigantic hanging panels have e craftsmen and weavers, months and e of painstaking work. Stylised trees um rockeries of colourful flowering hose leaves, finely veined and serrate a delicate touch to these specially 3 metre width wall hangings, which on sale but carried a price-tag of Rs each.

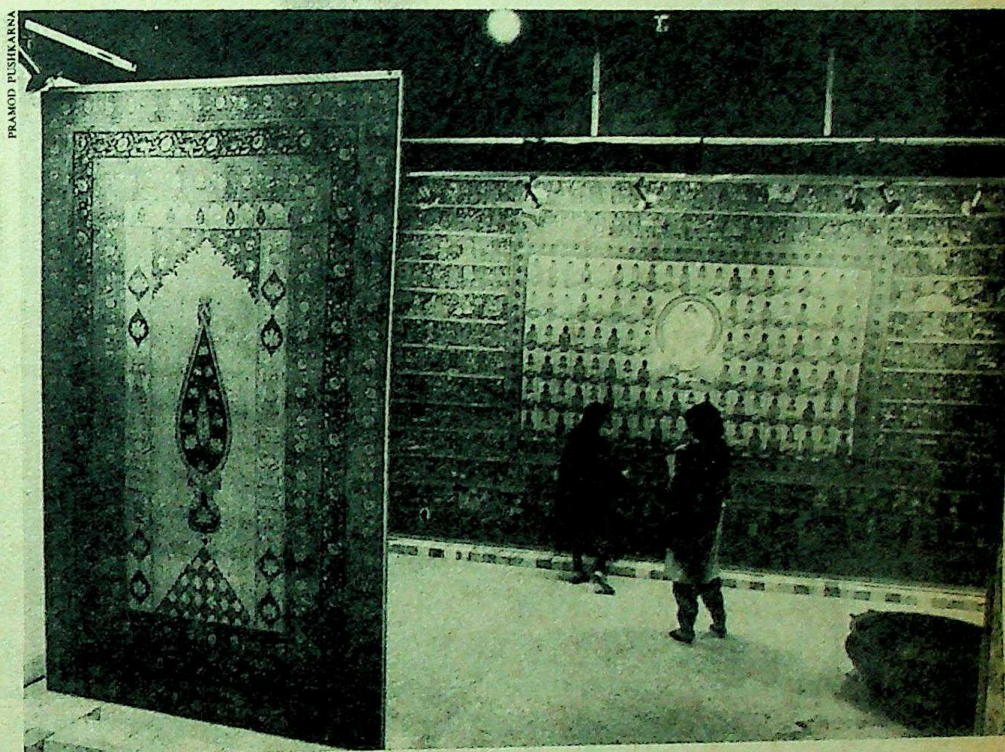
Buzzling Variety: In contrast to the ades of the hangings, were the glitte- intricate and detailed brocade saris els from the master weavers of Vara- and Kanchipuram. In an eye-catching s styles, designs and rich colours— ion brocades and silk brocades to hentic zari brocades—these designs rived many generations and have tured and preserved by the weavers cooperative societies and individual

first of the Weavers Service Centres arated as early as the 1950s by Jayakar streamline the thousands of tradi- ers from all over the country and

also to guide and encourage experimental work. Hand looms were set for the weavers at these centres, thereby offering them the basic infrastructure to operate from, especially for those who encountered problems setting up looms at their homes but possessed the talent and expertise. Said Martand Singh, the project director of Vishvakarma: "In the beginning we found that a great many craftsmen gave up their crafts for a more lucrative business. But, the centres

factor which is an absolute in our work is that we are continuously adjusting our ideas with the tradition and styles of the weavers. It is a perfect balance and it has worked since we started the centre, way back in 1958."

G.J. More, a master weaver, who worked for the weavers centre in Bombay and has been weaving silk Paithan brocade saris for the last 55 years, said: "It takes me four to 10 months to finish a sari, depending on the designs and their intricacy. It is back-breaking work but we have realised its worth all the effort because it is appreciated and much in demand." Haji Abdul Rashid, a Varanasi-based master weaver, who inherited the family tradition and has been in the



Exhibits at the Vishvakarma: colourful tradition

have caught them in time and trained and nurtured their talents and convinced them of the viability and undying attraction of hand- looms to that of synthetics produced by powerlooms of today. Believe me, although we have come a long way, we still have a long way to go."

Maintaining Quality: Although authentic raw materials like silks and gold and silver-plated zari are becoming rare and elusive, the weavers with the advice and guidance of the weavers centres and cooperative have managed to maintain quality. The centres have endeavoured to arrest the weavers' attempts to imitate mill and powerloom products. Said J.N. Supakar, the deputy director at Varanasi, and somewhat of an authority on weaving: "We are continuously updating our designs and experimenting. We have more than a thousand weavers coming into the centre whom we train. But one basic

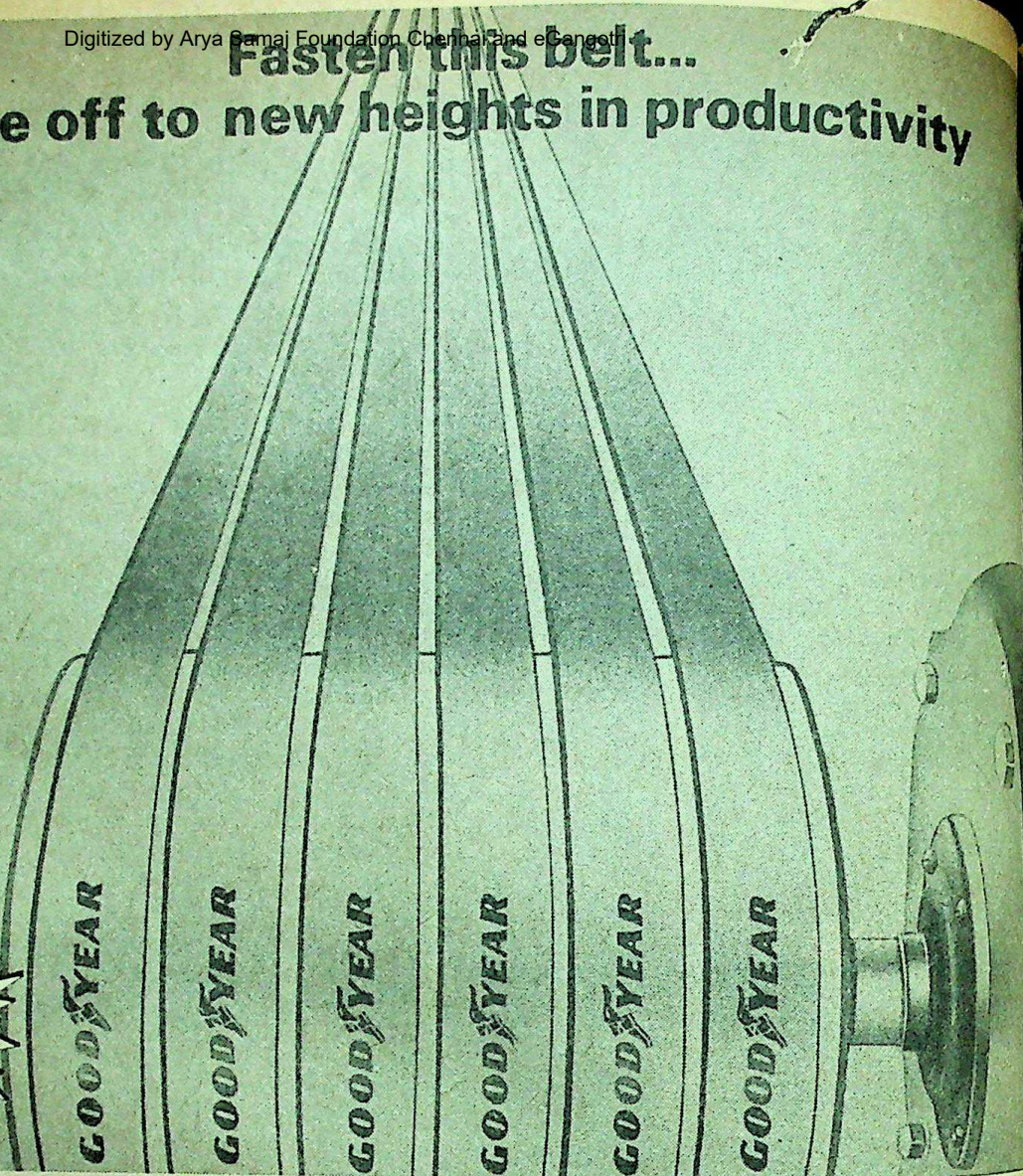
business for 40 years, said about his work: "We put in nearly 10 hours of work per day and with at least four people working on one sari, we can only hope to finish it in 20 or 30 days."

And now in Delhi, amidst the aesthetically displayed splash of colourful saris, minutely painted cloth hangings and towering panels of silks that were suspended from the three-level ceiling of Rabindra Bhavan, stood the makers dwarfed by their creations—the invisible men behind the transaction between the wholesaler, shopkeeper and customer, the master weavers who have survived the onslaught of industrial development. And as Khatri Mohammadbhai Siddiquebhai a master weaver from Gujarat reassuringly said: "We have been in this business for generations, and there's nothing and nobody that can make us give it up."

—ANITA KAUL BASU

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ARTS

SABAVALA

oments of Mysticism

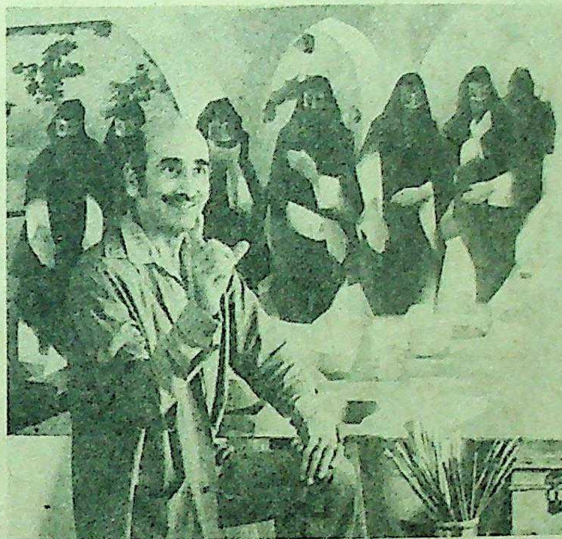
THE GALLERY on the opening day of the exhibition was crammed with viewers who had come to get a look at Sabavala's latest works. The show lasted fortnight at the Jehangir Art Gallery's gallery in Calcutta, had a prelude to the main exhibition at the city's art-lovers pouring a look at the artist's first showing. The cognoscenti and the uni-students, office-goers and connoisseurs, all visited the gallery in stream to study the 15 canvases represented more than 36 months of work by the modernist. "What I see in the manner in which all strata of view," said the artist with only a condescension, "even the so-called in the street makes the most of comments and asks delight-ful questions."

It is not new to Sabavala in his every show in the past has been, but the shift from the low-key to the known largely by only serious, the role of a crowd-puller like Sabavala comes as a distinct change. In his developing years in post-war when he painted the strictly geometric shapes which were to earn him the label of an 'academic' and the successful shows which followed, he spaced regularly in Europe, India and India, Sabavala earned a reputation for his haunting images with their fleeting glimpses of humanity.

Acclaim: In his peer group he has always been something of an outsider who was dismissed from the start as an artist too tightly tied to the academic traditions of contemporary art. Rejected by the rebels of post-Independence India, who formed the group in Bombay and the Calcutta group in that city to lead a brash new wave of swadeshi post-cubism, the artist shed his strictly geometric shapes and developed the subdued tone and famous luminosity which was to mark his work for the next two decades. Working in a style which was shared by the work of progressive group like Francis Newton Souza, Sabavala ignored the distinction between his fellow artists even as his work earned acclaim from both critics and the general public. "I was in

no way ruffled by the criticism nor by the open antipathy of some of my colleagues," said Sabavala recalling a brush he had had with the Paris-based Indian artist Akbar Padamsee. "The academic base of my paintings has been far from worthless: but that is one among many aspects of my work. If you pretend to hold your nose and call it 'academic' you will really be dismissing almost the whole of good contemporary Indian art."

Academic Background: Born the son of an affluent Parsi barrister in 1922, Sabavala's earliest art education was at Bombay's Sir J.J. School of Art, then a traditionally-run British institution steeped in classicism. More influential on the young artist were his



Sabavala at work: haunting images

years at London's Heatherly College immediately before the war and his long Paris stint in the ateliers of Andre Lhote and Fernand Leger, both brilliant artists from the generation that followed the first innovators of cubism. Said Sabavala: "I spent the best years of my youth in London and Paris. One of my co-students was 19-year-old Richard Lannoy. He was intense and searching. Much later he was to be known widely as an art scholar, the author of *The Speaking Tree*. There was even in those days a spiritual quest in him although his Indian years were yet to begin."

The Speaking Tree and Lannoy were to feature repeatedly in Sabavala's life. A fervent Indophile who married a Goan Catholic girl in Paris—she struggled by his side through Lannoy's years of scholarship before her untimely death—Lannoy has been preoccupied with the mysticism of spiritual India. The obsession has clearly rubbed off on Sabavala, for the artist's latest showing is dominated by

an ethereal look at mystics and mysticism. Coming full circle in his relationship as friend and mentor, Lannoy writes the introduction to the Indian artist's current catalogue, a perceptive but not unemotional look at Sabavala and his contribution.

Mystical Influence: Equally important in the context of his penetrating new look at mysticism has been Sabavala's exposure to a religious order in Bihar which counts his wife Shirin among its members. "Shirin and I visited a community of monks in Monghyr district in Bihar," explained Sabavala, "Shirin has been a follower of the swami who heads the community. Living there, certain impressions of peaceful nature and the serenity of life seeped through my mind, and I have tried to re-create them on canvas in an authentic manner."

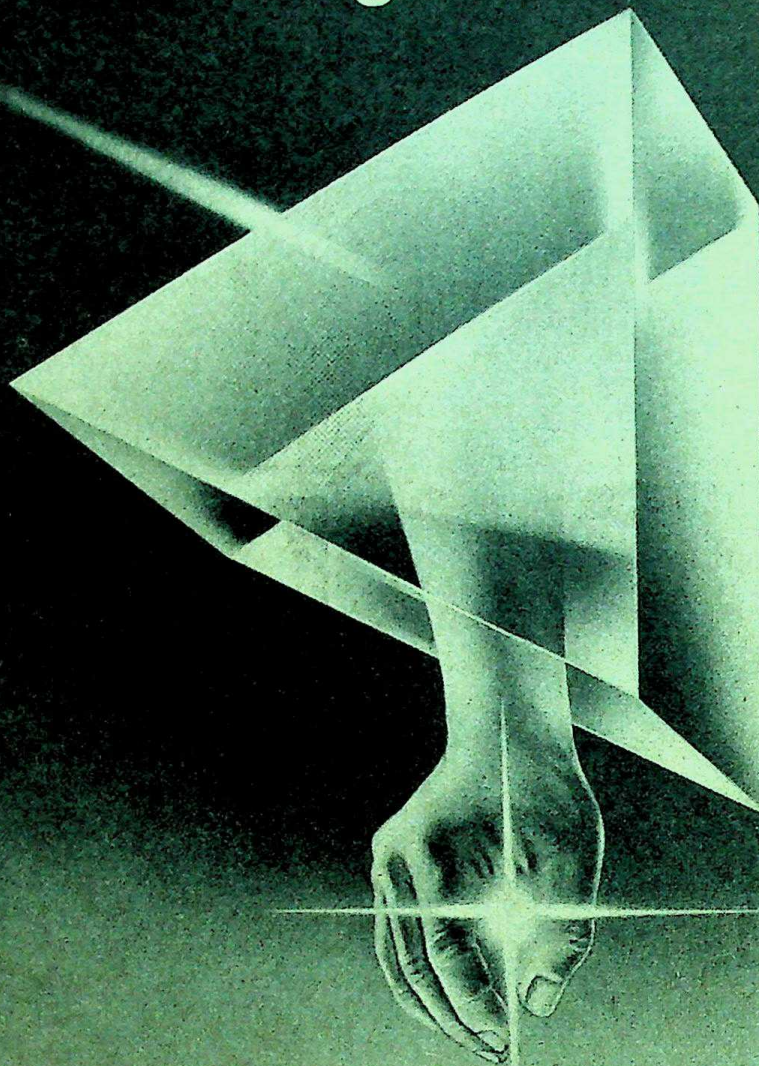
But it was not just the relatively recent Monghyr experience which left a deep impression on Sabavala's mind. He has always been preparing for the mildly terrestrial view of holy men which is seen in "The Strangers". For over two decades the artist's treatment of landscape showed the "holy" or mystic light of evanescence and his palette the translucence which is the hallmark of his work.

Masterly Treatment: His handling of light is masterful—a stroke breaking up to form a gauzy veil, the evocation of its gentleness and aura and a treatment of the blue sky and wispy white clouds to evoke this other worldliness has been typical of Sabavala. But it has become subtler and gentler with each show and the canvases which are inspired by Monghyr—showing monks in confabulation, in repose, and in contemplation of the Universe—suggest the great crest of achievement in this ascending development. Falling into place around the central corpus of mysticism-oriented canvases, the other work in his latest show display the same meticulous skill for creating hauntingly suggestive images. Perhaps the only other departure from the past is "the Purdah series", a direct and anguished look at the enslavement and bondage of women.

For Sabavala, the Bombay showing last fortnight was in many ways a vindication. Making up for the rejection of the early days and more recently at the Festival of India where the ruling Baroda corpus ensured that his work was pointedly absent, the public acclaim from last fortnight's showing clearly restored to the artist his place near the top of the contemporary Indian art scene. Having ignored the general tenor of post-Independence Indian art, Sabavala earned distinction as an original artist in his own right and his work in the 1980s leaves no doubts about his contribution to Indian art.

—DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

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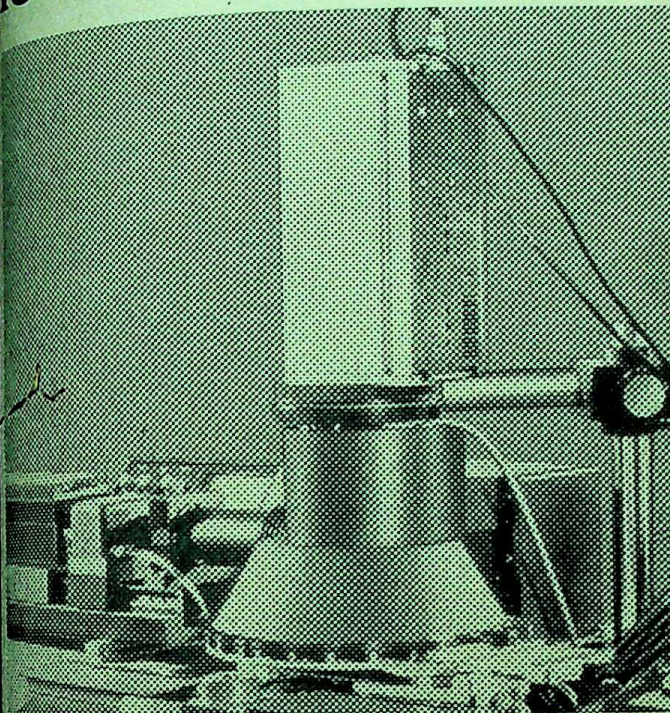
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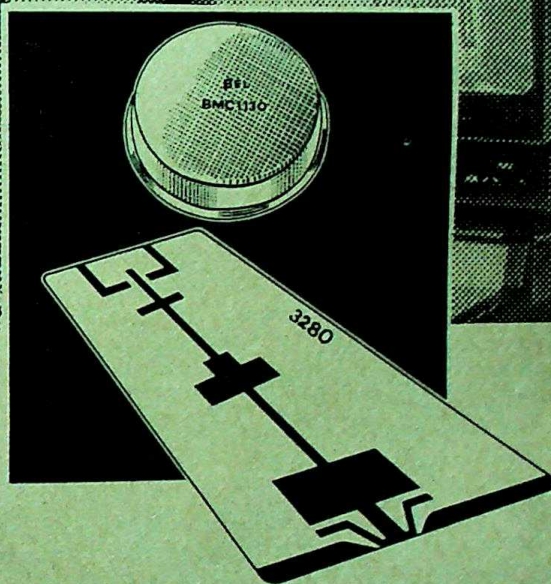
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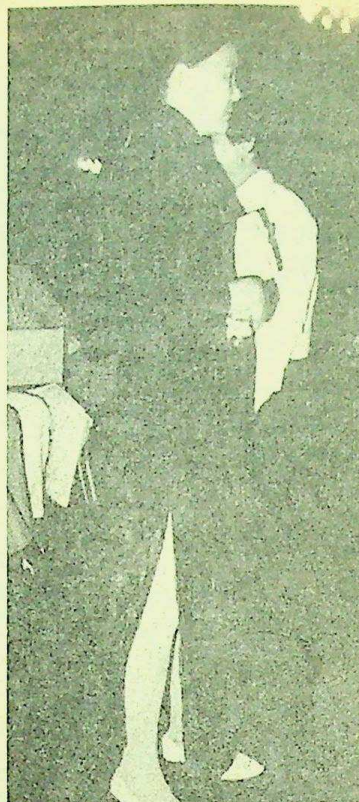
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Gavaskar and Husain: the master and subject



Zheng: striking pose

■ The towering superstar of the Indian art world M.F. Husain seems to have placed his finger firmly on the commercial pulse. Last fortnight, the painter lost little time in setting off with brush and palette to put the cricketing world's new hero Sunil Gavaskar on canvas. Gavaskar's immense patience, his hallmark on and off the pitch, saw him through a few sittings with the moody master who intends to make this piece a tribute to Gavaskar's recent record performance. Earlier, Husain, in a rare gesture, caught the attention of the media by painting a large canvas for the Child Relief and You (CRY) which is expected to be on sale next year and according to a prominent art dealer's estimates will fetch a cool Rs 3 lakh. And noting the feverish attention that cricket is getting, there's no doubt that cricket-loving art dealers will be quoting high to hang two masters on their walls.

■ On a chilly wintry evening, the only "hot" spot at the Trade Fair, in the capital, proved to be the permanent catwalk constructed in the middle of the fair

grounds. It could have proved a standard fare fashion show. But, thankfully, it turned out to be a little different. With the whole city a-buzzing with the CHOGM mela, this fashion show proved to be a heart-stopper. From a shimmering white backdrop emerged models dressed in what commenta-

tor and theatre director Barry John, summed up as "the commonwealth clothes". Out bounced the tartan kilts, sarongs, Caribbean robes specials in arresting colours and even two models sporting shields and spears and loose hanging togas from Africa. As a sideshow, it certainly turned heads mom-



The fashion show: showing off uncommon costumes

ntarily away from
'heads' in Vigyan

■ Recent reports from Beijing backed up graphic evidence to indicate that the western influence are rough China at a Scenes of courting jean-clad youth, heard of, are now fairly common. Even New Delhi embassy People's Republic have discarded their for traditional western. But if any more proquired, it was provided tonight in the show. Wan Zun Zheng, 30, se representative at the Neo-Youth Film Festival Calcutta. Sporting a sam slit seductively at Zheng, or rather his legs, considerably what would otherwise been a decidedly drab

SIGN POSTS



■ **Awarded:** M.S. Oberoi chairman and founder of Oberoi Hotels, the Man of the World award for 1983 by the International Hotel Association, in New Delhi. Oberoi is the first Indian hotelier to win the award.

■ **Awarded:** Well-known social worker, Baba Amte, the order of 'Anandwan' for his contribution to the rehabilitation centre in Pune. He was awarded the international Damodar award for 1983 for his work in the field of leprosy.

■ **Died:** Harish Chandra, India-born mathematician and permanent professor at Princeton Institute of Advanced Study, died of a heart attack at Princeton, New Jersey.

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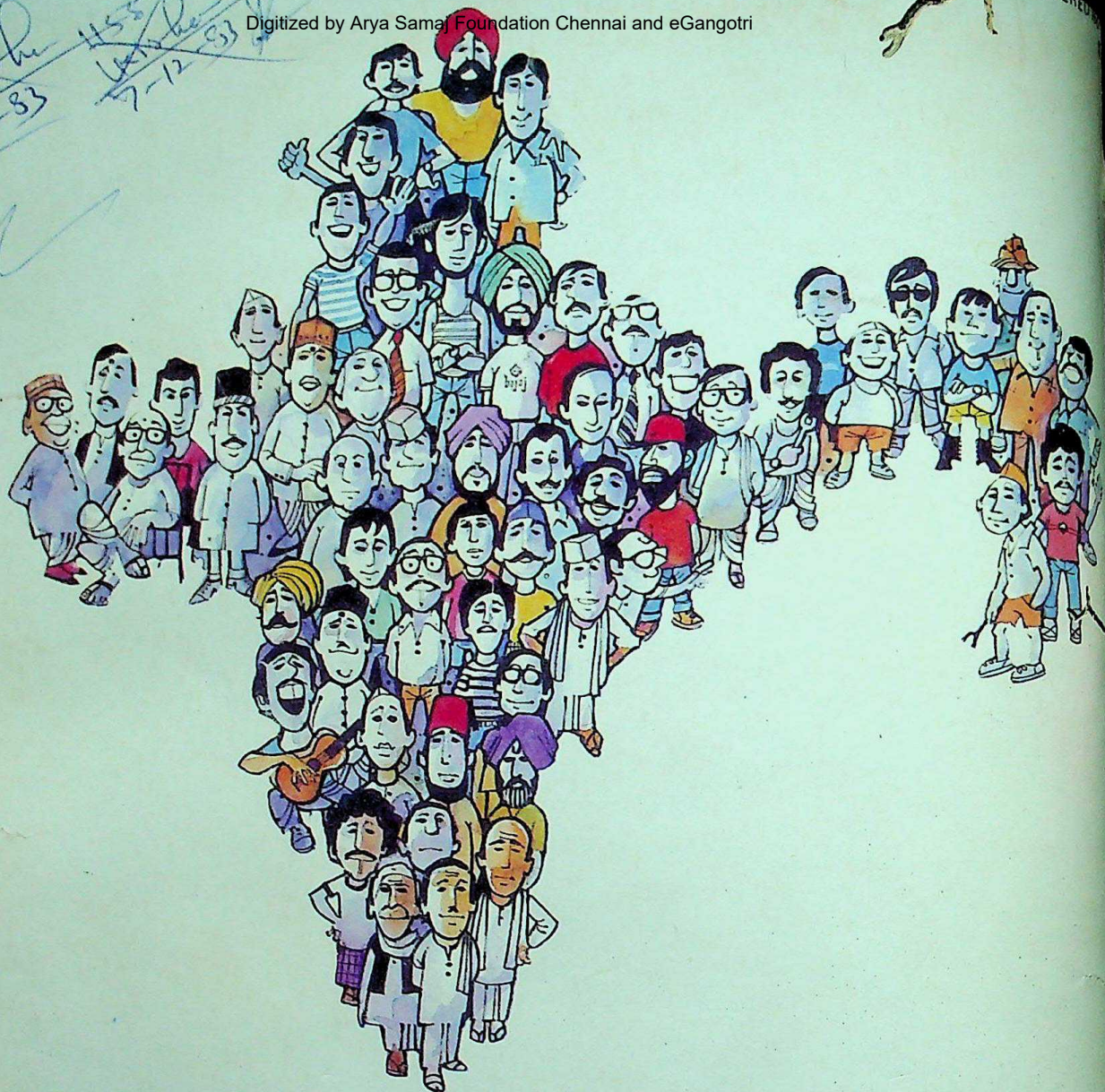
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The Spy Trade

If the public image of espionage is of the James Bond variety, the arrests last fortnight of senior retired military officers presented a much more sordid picture of the spying game. An in-depth report of the series of investigations that led up to the sensational arrests, along with a survey of past involvement of foreign agencies in India.

Cover Story ● Page 14



Bangladesh

In a series of dramatic moves last fortnight, Bangladesh's General H.M. Ershad declared himself the all-powerful President of the country, released all political detainees including Awami League leader Hasina Wajed and called for talks with the opposition, ostensibly in order to pave the way for general elections. With the opposition leaders initially reacting with scepticism, an atmosphere of quiet fear prevailed on the streets of Dacca.

Neighbours ● Page 125



Punjab

Since Parliament demonstrated rare unanimity last month in demanding stringent action against Sikh extremists, the Golden Temple complex has begun to resemble a military base on full alert. While a number of extremist groups inside the shrine bristle with kirpans and foreign guns, the most ebullient leader among them, Bhindranwale, has adopted an unusually conciliatory approach.

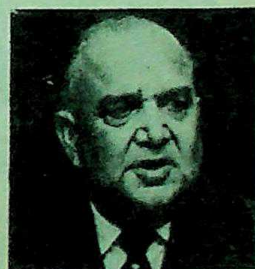
Special Report ● Page 70



Maruti

The first Maruti cars were driven out of the factory last fortnight. By all indications, the 800 cc car is everything an economy-conscious motorist would want. But, to stick to schedules, the company is having to import the car wholesale from Japan and it looks as if the long-cherished dream of a totally indigenous small car will remain a dream.

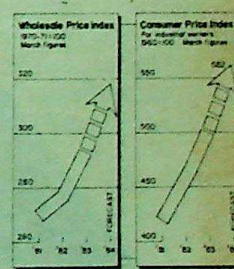
Business ● Page 94



The Army

The announcement recently of Lt-General S.K. Sinha's retirement was the latest episode in a story that began six months ago when the general, who was expected to take over as army chief, was superseded. The affair has generated tremendous sympathy for Sinha with questions being asked about political interference in the army.

Defence ● Page 62



Economic Forecast

What is in store for the Indian economy? Will the present buoyancy of agriculture, after a bountiful harvest, continue? Is Indian industry poised for further growth? The Policy Group tries to analyse the situation and predict the prospects for the country in the latest of the series of ICIM-INDIA TODAY economic forecasts.

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Controversial Code

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TODAY

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MANAGING EDITOR SUMAN DUBEY

SENIOR EDITOR S. VENKAT NARAYAN

EDITOR JAY DUBASHI

PHOTOGRAPHICS EDITOR RAGHU RAI

PICTURE EDITOR T.N. NINAN

DESKTOP EDITOR DILIP BOBB

CORRESPONDENTS

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K.N. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

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AYOUT ARTIST LOKESH BHARGAVA

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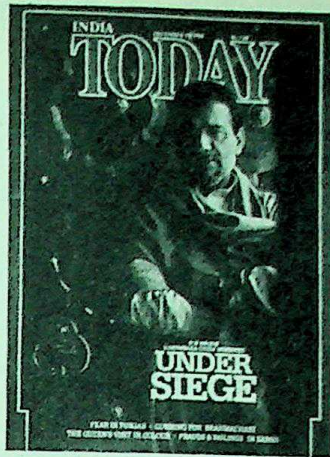
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DEFECTIVE STRATEGIES

The performance of the Ramakrishna Hegde Government in Karnataka is head and shoulders above that of the Congress(I)-ruled states (Cover Story, December 15). Congressmen will be digging their own graves if they fail to read the writing on the wall: the people are with Mr Hegde. In the interest of democracy, let the infant Janata Government be allowed to complete its full term.

Bangalore

V.S. Dileep Kumar

■ The Congress(I) has stooped so low that even a Union minister defends defections. It is suicidal for the party to pursue the dangerous game of toppling. The people of India and Karnataka in particular will never forgive it for this. People like Veerappa Moily should be stoned to death.

Madras

Ganapathy Subramanyam

■ Why can't the Congress(I) tolerate a few non-Congress(I) governments in the states? What does Mrs Gandhi think she is, a Mughal empress or something?

Madras

B. Palani

■ Kickbacks, slush funds and all kinds of corruption have already wiped out the Congress(I) from the southern states. Before this gangrene spreads to the northern states, let the prime minister do something about it.

Bangalore

Jayathirtha K. Pujar

■ Mrs Gandhi seems to have taken it for granted that India is her personal property and nobody dare share it. Having lost the south, she needs to dethrone one of the three Rams in those parts to regain her lost strength. Clearly, Hegde is the most vulnerable; no wonder she's trying hard to get rid of him. What she needs very badly, however, is a Karnataka-based Bhajan Lal. If there's one, will he please contact the lady?

Ahmedabad

Ketan Yagnik

■ Why is Mrs Gandhi wasting time trying to topple the Hegde Government which

seems to be performing quite well? If the Congress(I) is so determined to topple non-Congress(I) governments, let them choose badly run states. Like West Bengal, for example, where people are disillusioned by the misrule of the Marxists.

Calcutta

Prahlaad Ghosh

■ The cartoon that appeared with the cover story said more than what the seven-page article itself could communicate.

Bombay

Quaid Z. Najmi

■ Morality in politics was buried with Mahatma Gandhi. With power-hungry Congress(I) men breathing down his neck, it's hard to tell how long Hegde will last. Though he has survived the defection game, his ministry is under dialysis.

Bangalore

Ramanand Sharma

■ Your cartoon was the best of the lot that have appeared so far in the Indian press on the "tape tamasha" of the Congress(I).

Bombay

Surendra Kanstiya

A FRESH LOOK

Your report on Queen Elizabeth's visit to India came like a breath of fresh air (December 15). It was dismaying to see the entire Indian press going berserk about it. The foreign queen is Queen only in name and not in essence. The local queen is Queen in essence, but not in name. The English have a true democracy and an ornamental monarch on top—as an excuse. Here, we have a monarchy and an ornamental democracy on top. Both are descendants of kings and are busy grooming their kids for kingship. There they are doing it in a noble and open way. Here, the means adopted are crooked and hidden. It is this contrast which should be the plus point from the royal visit—a chance for us to juxtapose.

Baroda

Jay Pradeep

THE OTHER SIDE

It was judicious on your part to have invited Mushahid Hussain, a Pakistani journalist, to present an analysis of relations between India and Pakistan (Guest Column, December 15). Even as a democracy, India is presently an acute victim of fragmentation and seething violence. Our preaching restoration of democracy in Pakistan will only sound hollow. When both countries have already burnt good many calories to get closer, it will be highly immature on our part to put Indo-Pak relations once again in jeopardy.

Sagar, Madhya Pradesh

Sachin Saxena

■ The guest column presented an ill-informed and short-sighted Pakistani viewpoint. Where is General Zia's extended hand of friendship? He wants to stock arms on the

one hand and talk about a no-war pact on the other. The escalation of arms acquisition by Pakistan is mainly responsible for Mrs Gandhi's clenched fist and she is right.
Delhi *Sanjay Bhatnagar*

■ What really takes the cake in your guest columnist's article is "our muted public mention of the Kashmir dispute"! My, my! The Pakistanis had better take care their halo doesn't strangle them one of these days. May I remind Hussain that Pakistan has already attacked India four times in an effort to grab Kashmir, and their "muted public mention" is only because they have no alternative? I'd love to have seen their attitude if they had been our strength and size. Hussain and company can drop their holier-than-thou attitude; they're not dealing with Mahatma Gandhi anymore and the rest of us aren't impressed. Let them do their worst. Sure, the Pakistanis want peace with India, a piece of Kashmir, a piece of Punjab, a piece of this, a piece of that. And to think we thought the British were our enemies not so very long ago!

New Delhi

Kavita

CRICKET ANYONE ?

Cricket is the only sport in which the players have been given the right to shout "How's that?" while the game is on. Why is it so? With the number of "no balls and wides" being bowled these days, it is no wonder that an umpire makes genuine mistakes (December 15). The problem can be solved by replacing umpires with robots fully computerised to take split-second decisions and flash them on the scoreboards. Also, the practice of players questioning the umpire's decisions on the field should be dispensed with.

Pune

M.N. Bhide

■ Clive Lloyd's scathing attack on umpires Hanumanta Rao and Ramaswami is astonishing. If he is not satisfied with the umpiring quality of a particular person, he can surely recommend to the cricket control board to appoint another umpire of his choice? To degrade our umpires in such a manner is unfortunate.

Jaipur

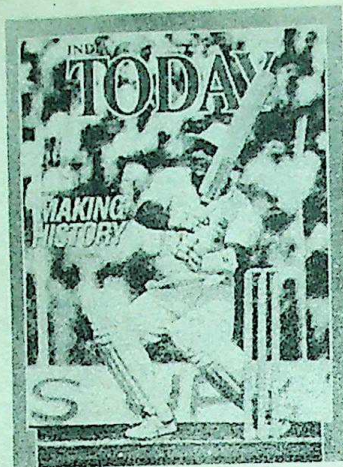
V. Bala Krishnan

■ It will be shocking for Gavaskar's admirers and to Indian cricket if he calls it a day so soon (Cover Story, November 30). It will be every Indian's proud moment when Gavaskar scores his 30th century. Hang not your bat till then, Sunny boy!

Palghat

Kuppathil Natarajan

■ Just when one thought that the last word has already been written on Sunil Gavaskar's achievements, came your cover story on him, which was refreshingly infor-



mative. The 'slip', however, showed when the story referred to the senior Rohan (Kanhai) as a left-handed batsman.

Madras

A.C. Sekar

The slip was ours: Kanhai is right-handed.

—Editor

■ The interview with Gavaskar proved that, as a person, he is as good as the runs he scores.

Ahmedabad

Shyam Sharma

■ Your cover story on Gavaskar was a little premature. You should have waited till he actually got his 30th hundred.

Versova

Jalaluddin Faizabadi

■ The cover story reiterates one thing: Indian cricket is still Sunil Gavaskar!

Bombay

Parag Kamani

■ The view that Gavaskar is the world's best batsman is farfetched. He is the best opening batsman, yes, but Viv Richards and Greg Chappell are no less great.

New Delhi

Smita Narang

■ Gavaskar equalling Don Bradman's record is certainly commendable, but it was not really cover worthy.

Pune

G. Jayateertha

■ Gavaskar's achievement made me a proud Indian in this lonely land. He should continue to play cricket and become the world's first man to aggregate 10,000 runs in Test matches.

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Gregory Saldanha

■ Why the hell should he quit cricket at this stage? He's still got a good deal of cricket left in him and we all want to watch him play for at least another couple of years.

Bombay

Crishna S. Kumar

■ Having equalled Sir Don's tally of 29 centuries and surpassed Boycott's run aggregate, Gavaskar is now verily on top of the

world. It is often said, "If Gavaskar India scores; if he fails, India fails." It has been proved to be true often.

Madras

Premalata Krishna

■ Who knows how the address which Gavaskar yearns for, would have affected the little master's brilliant career? After all, isn't it said of Cleopatra that her nose been slightly shorter, it would have changed the whole course of history?

Jamshedpur

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Your editorial comment on Gavaskar playing havoc with people's religious beliefs (November 30), could not have been to the truth. The root cause of this is the absence of qualified and educated professionals in politics. The young generation have been preferring white-collar jobs, meddling in the dirty pool of politics. The result is that the pool has become more polluted. The present Lok Sabha has fewer qualified members than the first one. The debates are less and the state legislatures have become less. The performance of the government at the Centre as well as in the states is deteriorating gradually. Only those who are not qualified enough to get the jobs are entering politics and ending up as rulers of this country. It has come to fix minimum educational qualifications for people contesting elections.

Madras

Sdn Loh

HEALING THE PHYSICIAN

I hope the report of the Indian Council of Medical Research on the abuse of antibiotics will wake up the people responsible for it. Otherwise, like we will soon have raging epidemics of biotic-resistant pneumonias, typhoid and so on.

Ludhiana

Dr Deep

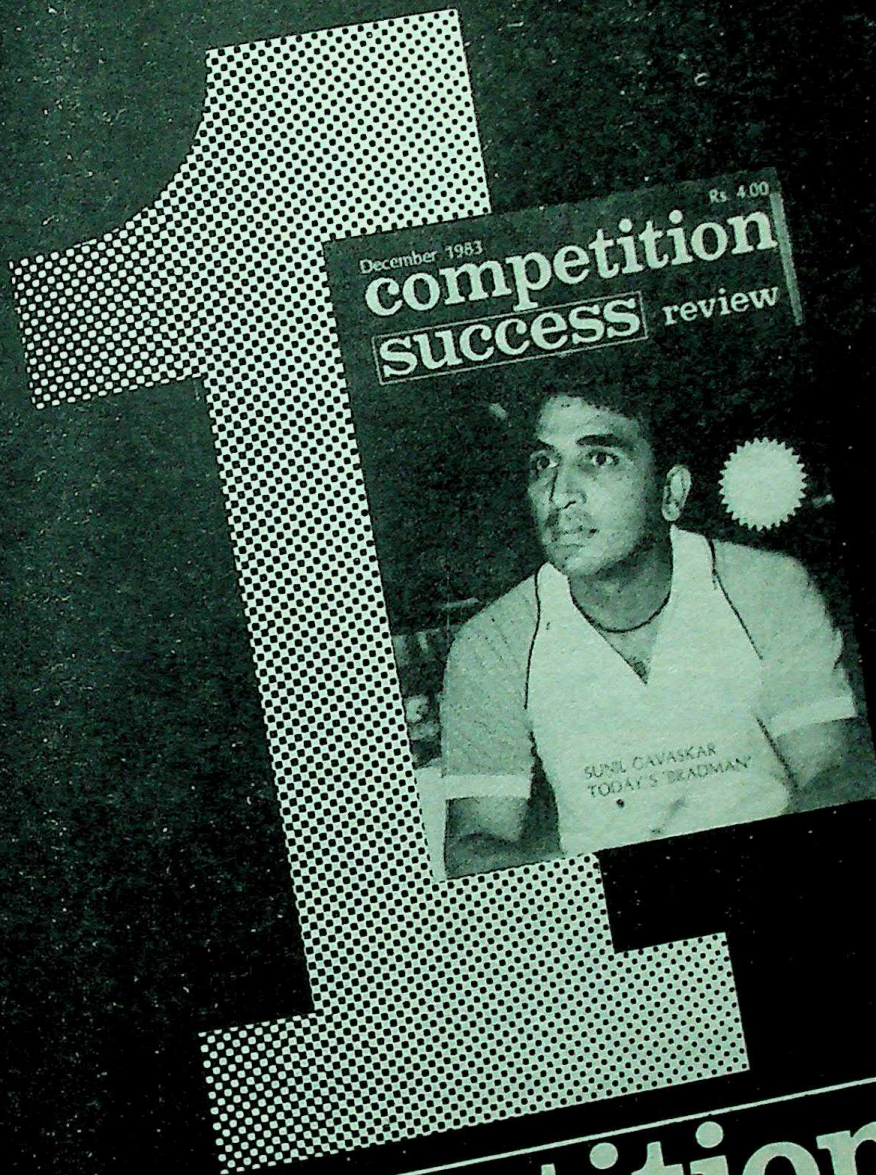
HEAT AND LUST

Your review of the film Heat (November 30) is prejudiced and biased. I am a resident alien living in Canada for the past 12 years. What James Ivory has made in this movie is a very honest depiction of culture and feelings. From my personal experience, I will definitely confess to a man lust for the white woman. I am one of Indians living in the West who has this. It is normal, natural. Why are quasi-intellectuals are unable to accept lust without shame? What's the deal? Lust plays a minor part in the movie compared to other Western movies. The critics so worked up about it, are se they are deprived of the same sensuality in their writings or films?

New Delhi

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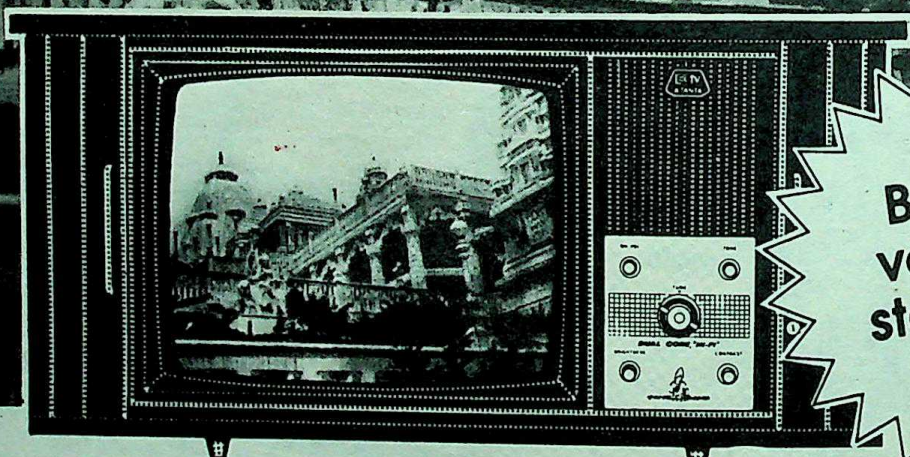
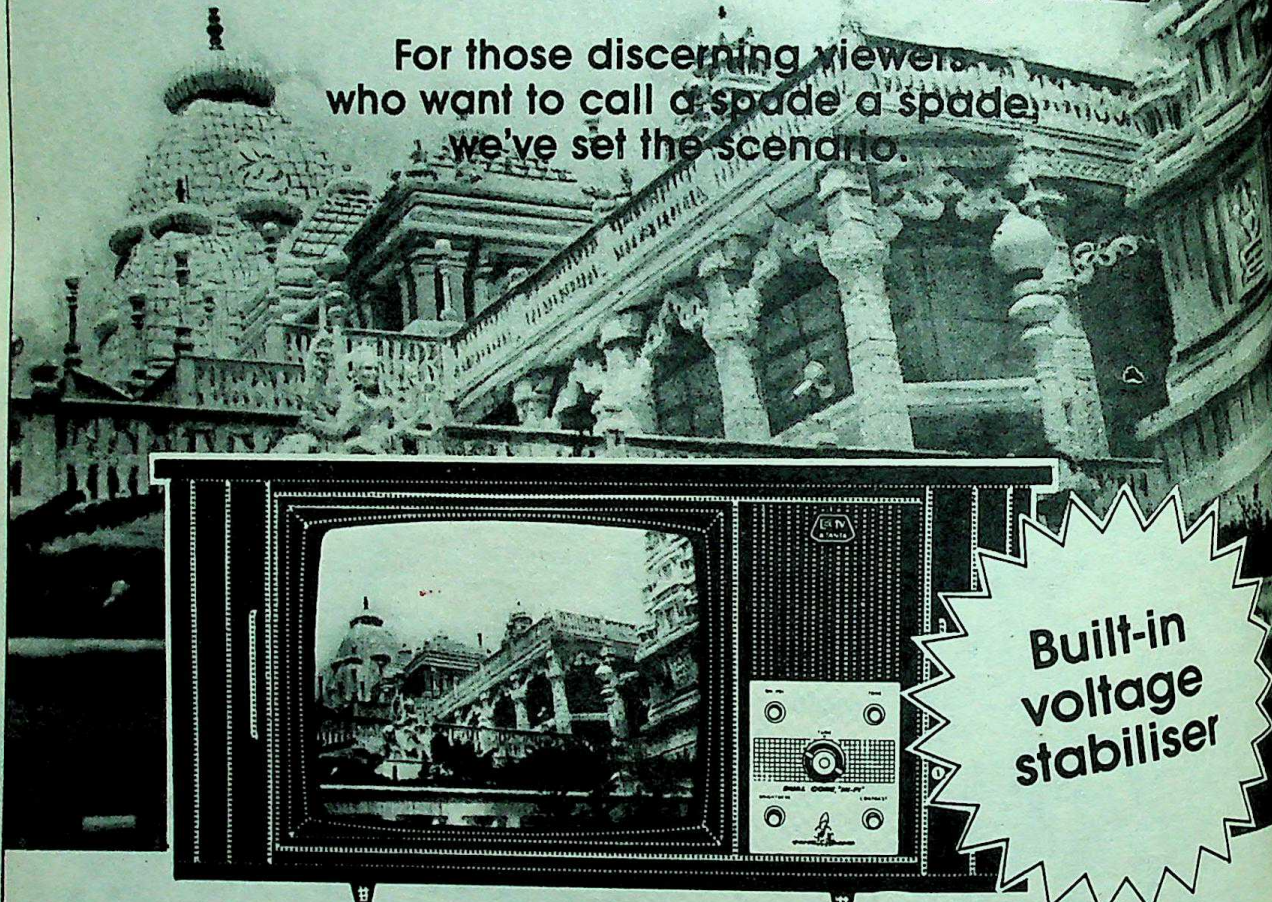
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The Information Disorder

THE NON-ALIGNED Media conference (NAMEA) in New Delhi earlier this month may not have produced the last word of wisdom on the subject, but it served to highlight a debate that is growing in strength and one that needs to be taken seriously. The fact that the western news media are often politically, economically, culturally and sometimes even racially biased is not in dispute—there is too much evidence on display, in print. There can be no cavilling, therefore, at the call for a new world information order that aims at enabling the Third World to see itself through its own eyes.

This said, some first principles must be firmly stated. At the start, some questions of credibility and motive must always hang over any information order espoused by governments—many governments, but especially the despotic ones that form the majority in the Third World. To the extent that the western media dominate the global dissemination of news because of the weakness of Third World media, the first task is to strengthen the hands of news organisations in the developing countries. The creation of a new world information order cannot, therefore, be separated from the freer flow of, and greater access to, information within the developing countries.

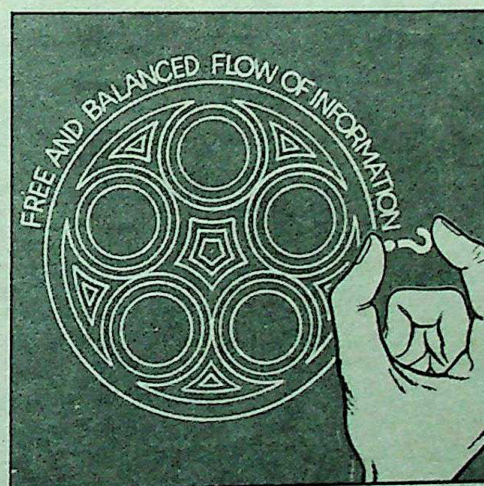
Most Third World governments have a poor record in this respect, and must unshackle their journalists, guarantee the right to gather and disseminate news, and give protection to journalists doing their work. A healthy and confident press within the developing countries is the best insurance against Third World readers being fed by news organisations accustomed to a different milieu. Without it, the debate for a new information order can only produce such anaemic creations as the non-aligned news pool, which is neither a substitute for the western media nor an effective complement to it. Indeed, a new information flow through government-controlled channels can only lead to an exchange of propaganda and leave the Third World of news as a western monopoly.

At NAMEA, Mrs Gandhi issued some noble and quotable statements. But the speechwriter's skill cannot hide the fact that she is pointing to the mote in the western media's eye while ignoring the beam in her own. She controls the two most powerful forms of mass media in the country—All India Radio and Doordarshan—and both are veritable monuments to biased reporting, tailored news, insipid programming and the gross lack of professionalism. If she were in a new information order internationally, she must be listened to with rapt attention in troubled Assam, the problem lay not with the BBC but with Mrs Gandhi's AIR. It needs re-emphasising that the problem is not the pervasiveness of the western media but the absence of a countervailing force. The former is feeding a market for news based essentially on the west, and both caters to and reflects the interests, view-

points, and inevitably, prejudices of its readership—which in the ultimate analysis determines what is news. The debate regarding a new information order has rightly highlighted some of the technical factors that prevent the growth of Third World media—the absence of basic communication facilities, the skewed structure of press cable rates, and much else. These need to be corrected, and a beginning has indeed been made. But the basic task is neither technological nor organisational, it is the creation of an environment within the developing countries that is conducive to the growth of a vibrant press.

INDIAN mediamen themselves need to ponder over the recent shrinkage of international coverage by the country's press. Most of the country's bigger newspapers have over the years been withdrawing overseas correspondents, and virtually none of them now has full-time reporters in even the neighbouring countries. This is only partly because of troubled relations with neighbours—and Pakistan's recent record of allowing in western newsmen at the height of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, while denying visas to Indian journalists, is certainly at variance with the sentiments pouring out of NAMEA. The western media can hardly be blamed, then, for being the sole source of information on what is happening in Afghanistan or Iran, or in the Arabian Gulf, where lakhs of Indian expatriates make a living. Surely the Indian public has a right to be told of the developments in these countries through Indian eyes, from an Indian perspective. The problem then is not acts of commission by the western media, but those of omission by Indian news organisations. The same would be true of countless other Third World situations. Result: a problem in Burma reaches the Indian reader through neither Indian nor Burmese eyes but perhaps French ones.

Sixty years ago, when the American Associated Press (AP) was trying to break the virtual global news monopoly enjoyed by the British Reuters, AP's general manager Kent Cooper complained of how "Reuters told the world about Red Indians on the war path in the west, lynchings in the south and bizarre crimes in the north" and pictured America as a "country engaged in race riots and prone to railway accidents, tornadoes, floods and crime." Another AP executive wailed that "the great spirit of the American nation was never portrayed," and Cooper added that Americans were forced to look at the world through British eyes instead of their own. The point here is not how similar the American complaint of the 1920s is to that of the Third World today, but that AP went out to tell the American public of global events through American eyes. The challenge before the media of the Third World today is similarly not to complain of injustice and bias but to face the challenge head on and correct the situation as it exists.



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VOICES

► He (A.B. Vajpayee) is a hypocrite. He is a man who has been posing as a chari who has given up the joys of life and is suffering for the nation... He is a coward who should not be allowed to occupy high office.

—Subramaniam Swamy in *India Today*

► I told him (Morarji Desai) not to give his papers; we can ourselves make but he did not listen to me. My father thinks he knows everything.

—Kanti Desai in *India Today*

► The more he (Bhajan Lal) uses the power of money and mischief the more (Mrs Gandhi) likes him.. (he) is now one of her stable chief ministers.

—Kuldip Nayar in *India Today*

► Parliament is supposed to be the mirror of the people but you can see only faces of the privileged class in the mirror.

—Kanwar Lal Gupta in *India Today*

► Farooq (Abdullah) is not an enemy of mine. He wants to attack the Centre wound is elsewhere and he has applied the scalpel on me. It is a political game, a cal black-mail.

—Dhirendra Brahmachari in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

► Radio and television will not tell you why Jagannath Mishra had to give up chief ministership of Bihar... There can only be speculation why Rajiv Gandhi disapproved of him; on his part, Dr Jagannath would continue to swear allegiance to him, reminiscent of retainers kicked out of court by emperors, but hoping to regain grace and forgiveness.

—Iqbal Malik in *Seminar*

► With others, politics may be the art of the possible, but with Mrs Gandhi it is the science of selfishness. Whoever is not prepared to help her in advancing the interests of herself and her family becomes an anti-national or a communist.

—Cho Ramaswamy in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

► The Congress(I) leaders are experts in spreading canards, in the art of whispering campaigns and in kite-flying.

—Ramakrishna Hegde in *The Express Magazine*

► It seems they (the Pakistanis) are looking for an excuse to attack us. We are getting signals from across the border that they are thinking of waging a war against us.

—Mrs Indira Gandhi in *The Far Eastern Economic Review*

► In India most of the action we do (on film) gets stuck in the Censors, the serious stuff becomes funny and comedy is very serious business. I would settle down for a serious business if given the chance.

—Kamal Hassan in *India Today*

► We feed our baser instincts by viewing (in films) vulgarised expositions of female anatomy and I am sorry for it. Cinema should be used to educate the masses.

—N.T. Rama Rao in *Eve's Weekly*

► Time and again it has been proved that I have been the best lover... People often asked me if I have the whole sole agency for love, since the attraction holds for ages from six to sixty! She (Zeenat Aman) loved me because she found me irresistible.

—Shatrughan Sinha in *India Today*

► They (new wave film makers) are seventh and eighth carbon copies. They are mongrels, neither here nor there. They would crawl on their asses to make successful movies, but not knowing how, they pretend to disdain us.

—Manmohan Desai in *India Today*



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NOTES

POT-HOLE LUCK

When the Americans wanted to test their Lunarmobile, they made a special surface, liberally garnished with pot-holes and boulders. They didn't have gone to all that trouble: Indian roads look like pieces of Swiss cheese and, according to the Pot-hole Stakes in Mangalore, the cheese has been rather long curing.

When one Mangalore resident crawled under his car



and saw his battered axle, he decided that something had to be done. Mere petitions to the authorities brought only a contemptuous shrug, so the Consumers Education Trust, Mangalore, sent out the town crier with the message that prizes of Rs 51 and Rs 25 would be given to the persons who discovered the two biggest pot-holes in the city.

The response was tremendous. The first prize went to Dinesh Kumar, who led the

judges to a crater measuring 10 m by 5 m and about 20 cm deep. It could hold 5,000 litres of rain-water and was situated not very far from the corporation offices. The second biggest pot-hole lay opposite Woodlands Hotel—6 m by 2.5 m, 10 cm deep. The organisers reportedly plan to hold more competitions of the same kind and rumours are that craters will not be lacking, for India has yet to put a man on the moon.

SCOOP!

There is nothing more frustrating for a reporter than to rush off to what he thinks is a riot but which turns out to be the police fraternity ball. But one axiom of the news trade is: if you can't find 'em, make 'em, and that is exactly what a group of Calcutta newsmen did recently.

They were following a procession of Ananda Margis, which was wending its way to

north Calcutta. What the newsmen were looking for were good pictures of the famed skull dance of the Margis, which they do with a human skull on one palm and a dagger in the other.

But at the public meeting that ended the procession there were only speeches and more speeches and yet more speeches. Finally one of the reporters shouldered his way to the leaders, and gave them a good tongue-lashing, the gist

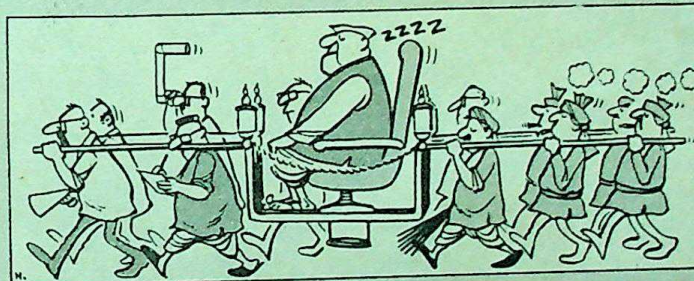


of which was that they wanted action. One Margi glanced nervously at the policemen present and muttered something about a provocation; the reporters stuck to their guns. In the end, one Margi said "Psst!" and led them down a dark alley, where three Margis cavorted quietly with the skull and the dagger, out of sight of the police. The reporters left satisfied with their scoop: "Margis Dance in Calcutta Streets!"

FIRST ELEVEN

A cabinet minister is not mere human being, he is of the elite. And he couldn't possibly do without a personal staff. Last month, Union Minister of State for Home P. V. N. Sankarabhaiah—not part of the elite himself—revealed to Parliament the make-up of a cabinet minister's army.

He is entitled to 11 people. They are, reading



from left to right, a private secretary, whose job is to ring up all important correspondents and make sure they get the mi-

nister's hand-outs and his point of view; an additional private secretary, who deals with the lesser newspaper-

men; a first personal assistant, who tells you that the minister is in a meeting; a second personal assistant, who tells you that the private secretary is in a meeting; a Hindi stenographer, who writes the minister's speeches; a clerk, a jamadar and three peons, who increase the country's biddi consumption. With 20-odd cabinet ministers jamming the corridors of power, that's a lot of biddis.

EVERY PASSIONS

The slaughter of Tamils in Sri Lanka provoked riotous passions in Tamil Nadu. All political parties lost no time in reacting on the sackcloth and ashes. One gentleman even offered to carry an army over the border, as another had done thousands of years ago, but he was turned green, almost sank, and had to return. But even in the mob, one man stood out. He is Sri Arunagirinatha



Gnanasambandha Desika Paramacharya Swamigal and he heads the Madurai Adheenam. Sri Arunagirinatha Gnanasambandha Desika Paramacharya Swamigal also has a revolver of German make and at a public meeting he flourished it energetically and demanded that he be allowed to go to the unserendipitous island and shoot every Sinhalese he could find.

He did not, of course, get permission. What he got was a

case under the Arms Act and another for causing public mischief and an ultimatum from the Temple Protection Committee, which demanded that he snap links with non-believers—meaning the DMK and the Dravida Kazhagam—failing which they would take steps to retrieve the reputation of the *math* "by every means open to us". Sri Arunagirinatha Gnanasambandha Desika Paramacharya Swamigal had better watch out.

—COMPILED BY JAGANNATH DUBASHI

INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

The Spy Trade

IN NEW DELHI'S concentric social circles, Frank and Kenneth Larkins were considered relatively "active" and upwardly mobile. Both had retired from the services pretty high up the ladder: Frank as a major-general in 1972 and Kenneth as an air vice-marshal in 1980. Most Sundays, the two brothers were familiar figures at the Delhi Golf Club or could be seen enjoying the company of fellow Anglo-Indians at the Dhaura Kuan Defence Institute's popular beer-and-biryani lunches.

Even then, it was obvious that the

brothers were leading double lives. In the company of fellow servicemen, the conversation was mainly reminiscences about service life and the progress of their progeny. "Frank and Kenneth were typical ex-servicemen. We all knew Frank was vaguely involved in peddling arms but his integrity was never in question," says a serving officer who was part of the clique.

At the golf club, however, their circle of acquaintances was far wider, embracing

Gill, face hidden, being escorted to court

senior bureaucrats, defence diplomats. Frank in particular have cultivated a wide range of previously connected to his last service as director, weapons and equipment at Army Headquarters in New Delhi that put him in direct control of weapons development projects and for the army.

Civvy Street: Three years ago style changed dramatically. Frank was obviously doing well as an agent for the *Brigade Nationale (FN)* of Belgium, world's leading gun manufacturer, moved into a first-floor flat in Delhi's Vasant Vihar colony where he was quite regularly. Kenneth, meanwhile, joined Usha Service Consultants, a firm based in the New Delhi commercial district.



defence place, which deals in defence supplies particular a number of senior retired service e range of on its pay-roll. his last service Consultants carries a lot of clout. and equipment by Kulwant Rai, a close relative s in New Delhi. Paul/Swraj Paul family and the control of has bagged some major defence projects and in recent years including the sale of submarine sonar equipment to be fitted ee years ago navy's Sea King helicopters. Ken- ically. Frank, was obviously destined for well as an agent successful career in civvy street. of Belgium. Then, the bomb dropped. manufacture November 3, a posse of officers from the or flat in Delhi Branch of Delhi Police accompanied where he intelligence Bureau (IB) sleuths quietly meth, means Frank Larkins from his Vasant consultants at house. Kenneth Larkins was picked simultaneously from his home town of commercial



Frank Larkins and (below) a smiling Jasbir Singh: double lives

Lucknow just one week before he was scheduled to emigrate to Australia where his daughter lives. The two brothers were charged under the Official Secrets Act for selling classified information to Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents operating under diplomatic cover in the US Embassy in New Delhi.

Larkins's impending departure for Australia had obviously forced the IB's hand. Both brothers had been under surveillance since 1981 when their diplomatic contacts and frequent trips abroad started generating suspicion. The IB surveillance team had at least seven opportunities since then to arrest the Larkinses in the act of clandestinely meeting US diplomats but each time their attempts were thwarted by the fact that the diplomats were driving souped-up Fiats



belonging to the US Embassy which easily outpaced the IB's Ambassadors.

The Larkins brothers must have known that they were under suspicion but greed soon got the better of caution. In March, the IB finally had the proof they wanted. Group Captain Jasjit Singh, an air force intelligence officer, had been planted in the office of the Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Operations), Air Vice-Marshal S. Raghavendran, a likely target for any espionage activity. Singh was attractive bait. He was a top-rated fighter pilot who had served under Air Vice-Marshal Larkins and he made it discreetly known that he was frustrated at a desk job and disgruntled with the air force.

First Approach: Sure enough, the bait proved too tempting to resist. Singh was approached by Kenneth Larkins on March 20 and asked whether he would consider passing on classified manuals of Soviet MiGs in the Indian Air Force (IAF) inventory. On March 24, Singh informed Raghavendran that the approach had been made and that Larkins had promised him Rs 30,000 for each manual. Immediately, the matter was referred to the prime minister and the cabinet secretary. Singh was instructed to pass on a classified manual on electronic equipment for the MiG-23 aircraft which he did when Larkins visited him in his office at Air Headquarters on April 3. On April 5, Larkins returned the manual along with a preliminary payment of Rs 10,000.

It was then decided to increase surveillance and pounce only when the manuals were in the process of being passed on to the CIA personnel. But Larkins's intended flight to Australia last month forced the IB to act earlier. But even so, they had enough evidence to nail the two. When shown the details of the surveillance, Frank Larkins quickly confessed. His 10-page confession led to the arrest of two more members of the spy ring, Jaspal Singh Gill, a Delhi-based businessman and his employee, Lt-Colonel Jasbir Singh (retd). Gill, a former employee of Hindustan Lever, had started dealing in sugar, fertilisers and condiments from 1972—he was involved in a multi-crore sugar deal scandal concerning a Swiss firm in 1976—and later became an agent for a number of western arms merchants after Jasbir Singh, a well connected former Armoured Corps officer joined him. Gill's company was registered under the name of EMGEE International.

High Connections: Gill was a product of the exclusive Doon School which, through the old boy network, gave him access to some well-placed people. Jasbir Singh was married to the daughter of Lt-General Harnarain Singh and was a course-mate of the present deputy chief of the army, Lt-General Hirday Kaul. His intimate knowledge of tanks and his social and

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

The Indian Connection

THE INDIAN connection with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) flowered into full bloom in the '60s. The collaboration included such projects as the establishment of a top-secret base at Charbatia near Cuttack, Orissa, support for the Dalai Lama who had fled to India in 1959 from Chinese repression in Tibet, the escape of Svetlana Stalin to India from the Soviet Union, the expedition to Nanda Devi to plant a monitoring device on its summit, and surveillance of former defence minister Krishna Menon.

Of these various collaborative projects, Charbatia has so far remained completely unexposed—until INDIA TODAY learnt of it from an independent source with access to the US Government's most sensitive, secret documents. During the course of several background interviews, it was revealed that the super-secret base, established in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 war with China, was similar to the base established by former CIA director Bill Colby in Thailand. Charbatia started off small, but by 1966 it had become far bigger than the CIA base in Peshawar from where the CIA conducted its U-2 air reconnaissance missions.

Charbatia started out small but evolved into a sophisticated operation with several spy planes based there. The base and its activities were considered so secret and sensitive that the CIA did not even ask the US budget bureau to finance its oper-

ations. The money came straight from the CIA director's contingency funds. The planes were a primitive version of the sophisticated early warning planes which were used for overflight missions over Chinese territory as well as to support support to guerrilla forays into Tibet.

The Nanda Devi expedition was successful. As Morarji Desai told the Sabha on April 17, 1978 when he was prime minister, a high powered device was taken in early 1974, when Jawahar Nehru was prime minister, to install clear powered remote sensing device on the summit of Nanda Devi (7,814 m) in Garhwal. The purpose of this was to monitor information on China's nuclear tests being conducted at the Lop Nur testing range some 1,500 km away to the north. The device was planted high on Nanda Devi in 1965, with the knowledge of Lal Bahadur Shastri, but was lost away in an avalanche and has still not been found. But in 1967, when Indira Gandhi was prime minister, a second device was located on the summit of neighbouring Nanda Kot and left there for one year before being removed in 1968.

More important, information gleaned from this device was shared by the Americans and Indians. At one point the CIA considered upgrading the facilities at Charbatia to the level of the CIA base at Taiwan. Specialists from the CIA thought of installing an over-the-horizon

CHARBATIA

Secret Base

FOR THE pilots of the American U-2 spy-planes it turned out to be a fruitless summer holiday in India. Everything was set for the final "go" from the CIA headquarters in Langley when the "stand-down" came from a dejected John Kenneth Galbraith in New Delhi. In spite of his intense, almost desperate persuasion, Nehru had turned down the CIA proposal to base a detachment of the high-streaking snoopers planes—one of which was shot down over the Soviet Union—at Charbatia, the fast developing airbase on the outskirts of Cuttack in Orissa, close to the Bay of Bengal and, as the plane flies, not too far from Tibet either.

Nehru's objection was not exactly based on moral considerations because

the base at Charbatia was a joint operation by the IB and the CIA. But he had been warned about the operation by a senior official, Malik, the all-powerful IB director. It was then against the CIA offer. Nehru was then against the CIA offer. He asked Nehru to insist on having a film shot by the spy planes processed in India and retaining one set of all the photographs. The CIA argued that each sortie brought back hundreds of miles of film and it was just not possible to process the technical facility to process and use it all in India.

Continuing Efforts: The CIA had offered to give India processed photographs later, but Malik would have none of it. Nehru followed his advice, spurning Galbraith's last minute requests and asking him to go and see Malik instead. The saga, however, did not end there. In the later part of 1963 when T.T. Krishnamachari, the powerful right-wing minister without portfolio in Nehru's cabinet

... would bounce signals off the ionosphere to pick up information on Chinese nuclear tests. Operations at the base gradually dwindled largely because of increasingly strained American relations with China during the Bangladesh war. While Mrs Gandhi knew about the Nanda Devi expedition, it is possible that she was not aware of the Charbatia operation. Only select people within the Indian Government and Indian intelligence were informed about the facility. This is not uncommon. The CIA and the Australian intelligence operated a similar CIA base in Australia without the knowledge of the Labour Party which was then in power.

The CIA was also concerned with training the guerrillas to be sent on raids, most of them unsuccessful, into Tibet in the mid-'60s. Other Tibetan guerrillas were secretly flown to the US for paramilitary training at Camp Hale, Colorado. Some of the CIA-planned raids into Tibet were actually led by CIA mercenaries. Some of the air support for the raids came from a "private" airline company based in Kathmandu. In reality the airline was secretly owned by the CIA. In other areas, the CIA was involved in the defection of a Soviet Union, her brief stay in India and her ultimate departure was handled by CIA case officers in India with the full knowledge and collaboration of the Indian Government.

The most sensational disclosure of the CIA has, of course, been the allegation in Seymour Hersh's book *The Price of Power* that Morarji Desai had been a CIA agent. Desai has vehemently denied the charge

The super-secret base was similar to the base established by former CIA director Bill Colby in Thailand. Charbatia started off small, but by 1966 it had become far bigger than the CIA base in Peshawar from where the CIA conducted its U-2 air reconnaissance missions.

and filed a multi-million dollar libel suite against Hersh in Chicago. Three prestigious Chicago law firms whose attorneys are being paid \$75 (Rs 750) an hour by Desai and his supporters are handling his case. Desai is expected to arrive in the US in May 1984 to give a sworn deposition.

The highly placed source who was not one of Hersh's five original sources has told INDIA TODAY that the CIA viewed Desai not as a spy or agent who was willing to sell out his country but as a kind of "asset" or "ally" in the same way as it treated such leaders as former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, Jordan's King Hussein and Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta. It is likely that Desai did not know that the CIA had listed him as an asset or ally, but if they did indeed treat him as such, CIA operatives were able to justify spending money on the operation.

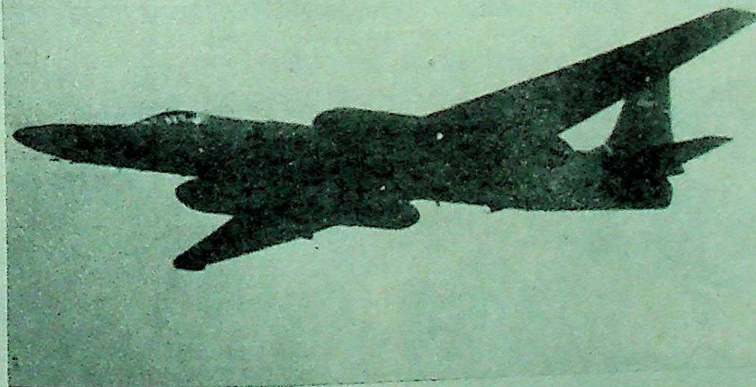
The CIA's dealings with leaders like Desai is known as "covert action" which started in a big way after World War II. As defined by Victor Marchetti and John Marks in the book *CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, such intelligence "as opposed to the raw information acquired through espionage and other clandestine means, is data collected from all sources—secret, official and open...the subsidised political parties, individual leaders, labour unions, and other groups, especially in West Germany, France and Italy". By the end of the '50s the CIA's clandestine activities began to focus on the Third World. In a private talk to the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Bissell, former head of the CIA's clandestine activities explained the theoretical undergirding of covert activity of the kind in which Desai was used. "Covert action is an exercise in seeking out allies willing to cooperate with the CIA, preferably individuals who believe in the same goals as the agency, at the very least people who can be manipulated into belief in these goals...of the larger and more sensitive interventions, the allies must have their own motivations...many of these 'penetrations' don't take the form of 'hiring' but of establishing a close or friendly relationship which may or may not be furthered by the provision of money from time to time..." The important point is that the CIA's alleged contacts with Desai were not an aberration but a part of what in the '60s was a widening collaboration with the branches of the Indian Government.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR in Washington

... was a joint operation by the CIA. But he had persuaded him to send a cable to Nehru asking him to change his mind about the U-2s. Nehru ticked him off with a curt "please do not saddle into this".

If the extent of cooperation seems surprising, it must not be forgotten that these were the days of the great Indo-US friendship that began in the wake of the 1962 war with China. The Americans were pouring in large amounts of arms,

intelligence personnel, organising the Indian guerrilla network, training Tibetan guerrillas and setting up facilities for the surveillance of Tibet for reconnaissance and to drop supplies for the Tibetan guer-



The U-2 spy-plane: grounded

rillas, mainly Khampa horsemen. The IAF did not have any aircraft which could be used for the purpose and, in principle, Nehru was not opposed to letting the Americans fly U-2s from Charbatia.

Later, the Americans agreed to build a plant for processing spy aircraft films. Nearly 60 CIA technicians worked round-the-clock at Charbatia to build the huge plant, living in 30 air-conditioned flats built specially for them. But by the time the plant was completed in the late '60s, a certain chill had crept into Indo-US relations. US interest in the project also gradually diminished with the advent of the satellite era.

India has, thus been using the Charbatia airstrip exclusively for processing pictures brought in by its own reconnaissance aircraft.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

army connections made him an ideal candidate for the job of 'liaison officer', the euphemistic title sported by others of his ilk who are to be seen haunting the corridors of the ministries.

INDIA TODAY had met both Gill and Singh last year in the course of investigations into the Centurion tank deal when the tanks got to South Africa. Defence Ministry sources had indicated that Gill had been involved in the deal and though he denied it to INDIA TODAY, he admitted that he was negotiating for various defence contracts. He along with Lt-Colonel Jasbir Singh had also been under IB surveillance at his posh Sunder Nagar house. His American connections went deeper than mere commercial ones. He was divorced from his German wife and at the time of his arrest, had been living with an American woman. His daughter lives in the US and Gill has made frequent trips there in the past few years.

THOUGH the Larkins' confession is being kept a close secret, it is learnt that the spy ring was much bigger and included another air vice-marshal who left India five months ago and has obviously slipped out of the net. It was said that he was recruited by a CIA operative who was an attaché at the US Embassy. He in turn recruited the Larkins brothers who were asked to recruit more people. The original CIA operative had left India in 1982 and handed over the network to Harry L. Weatherbee, the CIA man named in Larkins' confession who was given 24 hours to leave the country after the spy ring was busted in late November. A third CIA official whom the IB has implicated in the case is still in Delhi and IB sources say that he will also be told to get out once there is more proof of his involvement.

Frank Larkins has also been charged under the Excise Act and the Firearms Act. When the arrest took place, the investigating

In the Larkins case, what the Americans had asked them to obtain related to the electronic, avionics and other fittings, including surveillance cameras, inside the MiG-25 and the specialised equipment installed in the T-72 tanks.

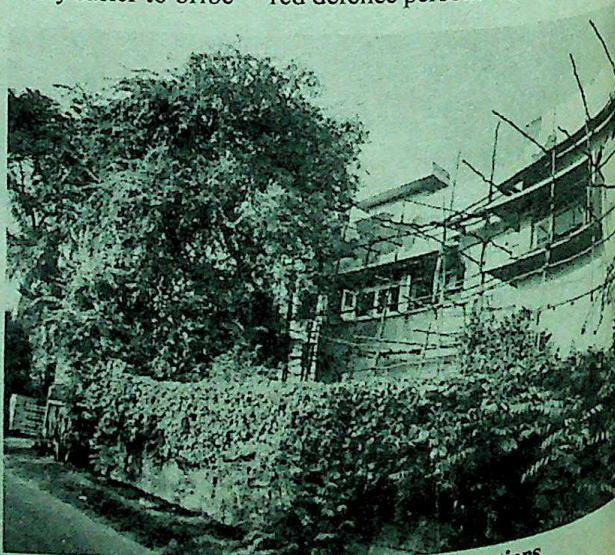
officers discovered 16 bottles of Scotch whisky and one bottle of champagne in his house along with an unlicensed 12-bore shotgun. The officers thoughtfully left behind the bottle of champagne because Mrs Larkins was celebrating her birthday on the day of her husband's arrest. In Frank Larkins' bank account, the officers seized Rs 7 lakh. In his confession, Larkins had stated that he was being paid Rs 5,000 a month by Fabrique Nationale and another \$500 (Rs 5,000) a month by the Americans.

Vital Areas: But whatever the ramifications of the latest spy scandal—the biggest since the Samba spy case of 1979—it has succeeded in focussing attention on two vital areas. One is the nature of the material that the Larkinses and their associates were passing on to the Americans. Traditionally, the Americans have only been interested in one specific aspect of defence-related espionage in India—details of the Soviet equipment in the armed forces. India is one of the few countries outside the Iron Curtain that gets comparatively recent Soviet weaponry and is therefore a logical target. And, as the latest scandal reveals, it is probably easier to bribe

people with access here than it would be in other countries with comparable military establishments. In the Larkins case, what the Americans had asked them to obtain was not just intelligence as it is made out to be. Essentially, it related to the electronic, avionics and other fittings, including surveillance cameras, inside the MiG-25 and the specialised equipment installed in the T-72 tanks. Both the MiG-25 and T-72 have been in operation for some time and it is unlikely that the American defence intelligence does not possess that information. Essentially, the material being obtained was not new, but firm information already in their possession or to plug gaps, if any, in their intelligence.

Similarly, Gill and Lt-Colonel Jasbir Singh were passing on information on the equipment gleaned from the defence forces. In fact, during his confession, Frank Larkins said that at no time did he feel he was betraying the country and that he would have dreamt of indulging in espionage. His contact had been a Pakistani. In the years, every single air attaché posted in Washington in the Indian Embassy was regularly cultivated by the CIA and they red either money or permanent settlement in the US in exchange for information on Soviet equipment being inducted into the IAF. It speaks highly of the calibre of the person that so far only one, Air Commodore M. Khanna, succumbed to temptation. He was court-martialled in absentia and living in the US.

Embarrassing Revelations: But the scandal seems to have changed quite dramatically in recent years, which is why the area that the current case focusses on—the increasing involvement of ex-service personnel in espionage—acquires added importance. There are at present around 70 companies with representatives involved in India's defence trade and almost all of them have senior defence personnel in key positions.



Frank Larkins's flat in Vasant Vihar (left) and Gill's residence in Sunder Nagar: complex connections

***Arms dealers hiring
ex-servicemen as liaison men
clearly renders the situation
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information that is classified.***

resistance to corruption in the form of kickbacks on the part of bureaucrats and politicians has become virtually non-existent. In such a scenario, the threat of succumbing to temptations by foreign spies is an ever-present one.

WHAT is worrying the Government more is the kind of influence that agents and their employees now exert on the course of major defence deals, often at great loss to the country. Their influence is extended further by the fact that the situation is tailor-made for such a situation. India is an arms dealer's paradise because of the unnatural secrecy that surrounds all defence deals, the abnormal delay in their procurement and the increasingly vested interests of key people in defence research and development organisations. A number of employees of arms dealers are former employees of major defence establishments like Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

Recently, a brigadier who retired as director of the Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (CVRDE) has been employed by Kirloskars who are bidding for the installation of their engines in the army's Vijayanta tanks being manufactured by the CVRDE. The engines are being sold in competition to the L-60 engines being manufactured by the Heavy Vehicle Factory, a public sector unit. The brigadier was also in charge of the main battle tank (MBT) project. In another case, a major-general who retired as director of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (EME) has been employed by Leyland of the UK which is currently trying to sell India the L-60 engines directly as replacement for the L-60s being produced under licence here.

Purchase Mix-up: Similarly, the proposed purchase of a heavy machine-gun (HMG) is another example of manipulation by arms agents. The search for the gun started in 1977-78 under an expert committee headed by former army chief General K.V. Krishna Rao. The committee found that only Bel-

gium and the US manufactured the type they were looking for. In 1978, the Belgians brought the FN heavy machine-gun for trials in Mhow and, thanks to the secrecy the Government maintains on deals, discovered that what the Indian Government wanted was dispersion and not accuracy. They withdrew and the deal was then negotiated with Remo, another manufacturer.

Meanwhile, the Government changed and after a gap of 18 months, when the Rs 89 crore deal was about to be finalised, it was discovered that Remo did not make the barrels for the HMG which were manufactured by Maremont Corporation in the US. Immediately, there was a tussle among Indian agents to try and get the agency for Maremont while the Indian Government thoughtfully obliged them by taking its own time to decide.

One of the people bidding for Maremont's agency was Jaspal Singh Gill. Maremont, however, decided to give it to a company called Inter-trade. In 1981, it was decided to conduct retrials of the gun. Three contenders remained in the fray, FN, Maremont and a French company. Finally only FN and Maremont showed up. Maremont's bid was objected to by the Ministry of External Affairs. On the HMG file is a noting by a senior ministry official that the US Government would not be reliable in guaranteeing supply of the system. At the bottom of the noting is written "Not Recommended".

Despite that the deal was signed under pressure with Maremont early this year, subject to ratification by the US Government. The US Congress predictably added certain amendments to the contract which the Indian Government objected to and the contract was cancelled. Finally, the only people left in the field were FN, the original contenders who had bid for the contract in 1979. The HMG file is still lying with the defence minister for the past 60 days and nothing further has been heard about the case.

In fact, before he relinquished office, Krishna Rao sent a confidential letter to the prime minister in which he clearly states that the HMG project was started because Pakistan had acquired it and the Indian army desperately needed a counter system. He states that he would not like to leave office without recording the fact that the HMG is still not in use by the army and he would not like to be held responsible for it later. That only illustrates the kind of manipulation rampant in the arms trade and its vulnerability to outside interference and espionage.

While the Larkins episode brought into sharp focus the unhealthy aspects of the retired defence officers' involvement in the tricky arms business, on the intelligence front it underlined the fact that despite the phenomenal growth in the size of India's

...ants, which employed Kenneth ... at a salary of Rs 2,500 a month plus ... on deals, also employs a lieutenant ... an air vice-marshal, an air ... and a naval captain. ... reason why so many retired defence ... are being snapped up by companies ... in weaponry is obvious: to use their ... in the services and their intimate ... of weapons for commercial ad- ... The Larkins ring was an exception ... they were arms peddlers who were ... fighting as minor spies. A vast majority ... ex-servicemen currently in the trade ... been genuinely shocked and saddened ... Larkins affair since it reflects badly on ... and, inevitably, also puts them imme- ... under a cloud of suspicion. ... Unfortunately, the burgeoning Indian ... bazaar puts them in a paradoxical ... Because of their knowledge and ... many of them feel that they are ... suited to sell weaponry to India. After ... their career in the services offers them ... for little else. The dramatic change in ... lives after retirement is, of course, an ... inducement. From living in rent-free ... with orderlies at hand and ... cars for mobility to paying their own ... petrol and maintaining a house on a ... of Rs 1,400 a month is for a senior ... a trauma that proves difficult to ...

Sensitive Points: Given that situation, ... of high-ranking former ser- ... in the arms trade was predicta- ... equally predictable was something like ... Larkins case. Arms dealers hiring ex- ... men as liaison men clearly renders the ... fertile for foreign governments to ... in espionage games. For one, they ... both the knowledge and the access to ... information that is classified. Being in the ... trade they are, there is a constant ... information to their principals about ... negotiations and purchases. ... many cases, their principals are close- ... to the governments of various ... One of the leading arms dealers in ... is, for instance, an agent for at ... even leading western arms manufac- ... He is also the sole agent for Soviet ... European arms companies. The ... that he is a civilian with access to classi- ... material only proves how vulnerable the ... bureaucratic-military set-up is to fo- ... intervention. ... other weak point is the money in- ... India's arms bazaar is worth an esti- ... Rs 500 crore a year in contracts, a ... that has been steadily rising since 1977 ... India began to wriggle out of its depen- ... Soviet equipment and shop in the ... market-place. With competition get- ... increasingly cutthroat, the threshold of

intelligence agencies in the recent past the country's security umbrella remains prone to leakages. It is not much better than at any time during the past two decades when, time and again, foreign intelligence outfits have penetrated it with success.

Beginning with the KGB in the late '50s, every major intelligence agency of the world has taken increasing interest in India. The following are the more significant examples:

In the late '50s the KGB photographed an Indian Embassy employee in Moscow in a drunken orgy and blackmailed him into spying for them on his return to India. Harry Rositzke, the CIA station chief in New Delhi from 1957 to 1962 describes this graphically in his KGB: *The Eyes of Russia*. The IB caught the 'mole'.

Around the same time Rositzke was running 'moles' in the Indian army headquarters. According to John D. Smith, a CIA colleague of Rositzke's who later defected to the Soviet Union, the early CIA successes included the alleged enrolment of a former Indian army chief for spying.

During the Bangladesh campaign the

CIA succeeded in hiring none else than Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed, a member of the Bangladesh Cabinet in exile operating from Mujibnagar (8, Theatre Road, Calcutta). The RAW sleuths tracked him down and even used him to plant disinformation on the CIA. A few months later, after Bangladesh's liberation, RAW's joint director Phany Banerjee who had headed the operation was found dead in a room of Dhaka's Hotel Intercontinental. His associates believe that he was killed.

In 1979 the Morarji government had to send away two Soviet diplomats on charges of spying on the eve of Kosygin's visit. It is now believed that while the diplomats had been spying for some time India was tipped off by the CIA at the "right" time, for obvious reasons.

In 1976 the IB arrested F. D'Souza, a deputy principal information officer with the Press Information Bureau (PIB) for trading secret documents with the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). It later turned out that the documents were forged but the incident confirmed the SIS's interest in India.

Just when Prince Charles was ceremonially taken round the Dockyard alert navymen caught frogmen flapping around, trying to get information on the powerful Kalyan-class destroyers just acquired by the navy.

The Samba spy scandal which involved the entire officer corps of an infantry brigade based at Samba was supposed to be spying for Pakistan.

The arrest in 1979 of Mahabub Khan, a personal assistant to Y.B. Chavan, who was deputy prime minister in the Charan Singh cabinet, on charges of spying for Pakistan.

The list only includes a few of the prominent cases which were either reported by the Indian agencies or reported in the press. Nevertheless, it confirms the nature of the country's security system. India is a front line state, belonging to a different, relatively low-grade category of top-flight intelligence operations. The problem with the Pakistanis is that they would make a dead end of the western agencies would do so with

INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATIONAL CHART

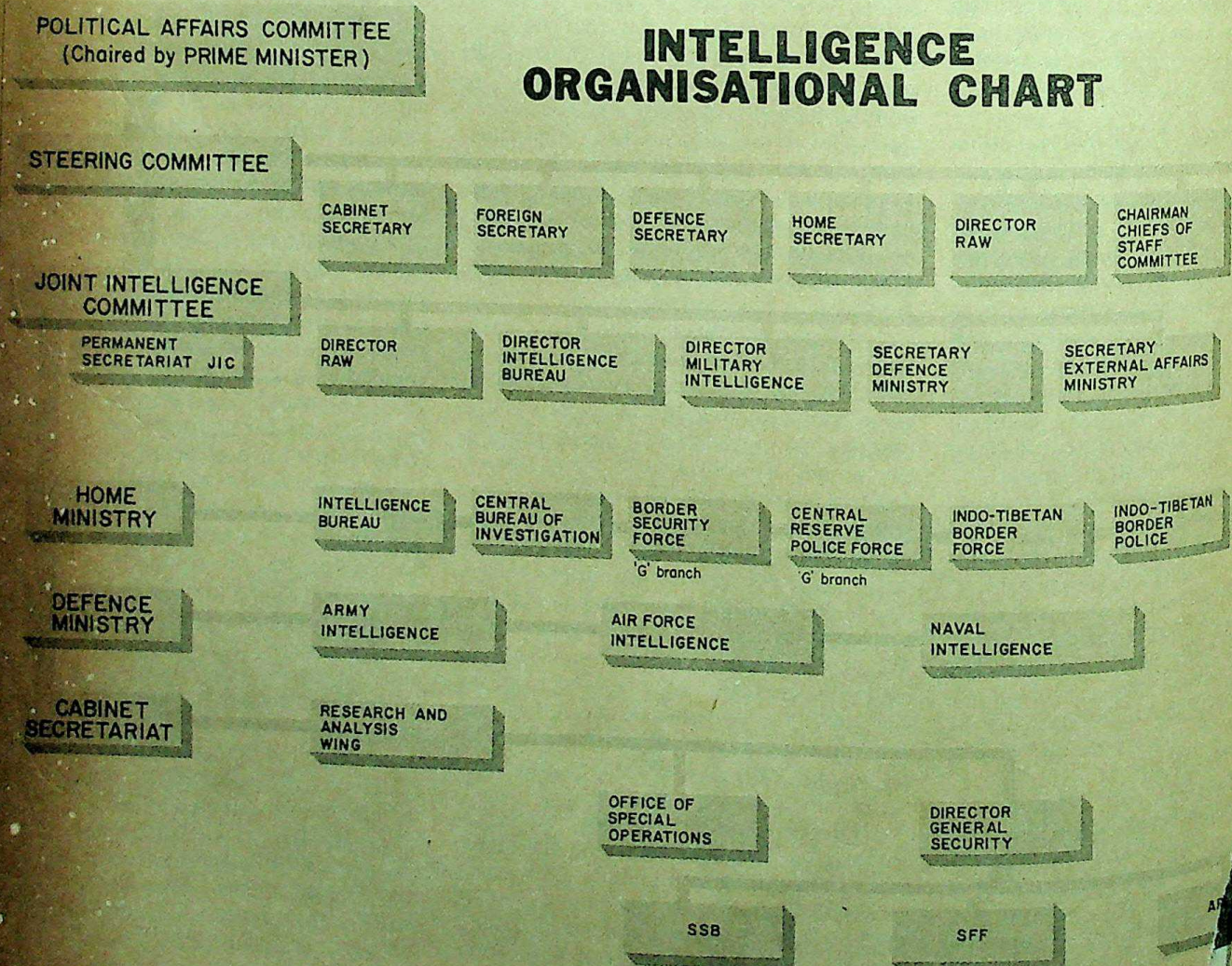


Chart by B. K. Sharma

even the Larkinses would have hesitated from working for them."

Modus Operandi: The Pakistani intelligence agencies have been basically banking on Pakistani visitors to India, now around a million every year, who merge with the local population. Often they have also hired clerks and couriers in sensitive ministries and departments. The arrest in 1979 of Ram, a clerk in the Defence Ministry, had apparently been on the Pakistani payroll for over two decades for as little as a few rupees a month is an example. Says a RAW official: "A favourite Pakistani tactic is planting agents disguised as cobblers, barbers and newspaper vendors in cantonment towns and around the key IAF bases. In 1977 Indian sleuths captured a Pakistani near the sensitive Uttarlai airbase in Jammu. The barber was a senior Pakistani, belonging to a high-grade family. He was operating as a spy for the Pakistani government. He was making a deal to do so."

Mysteriously, not very much is heard of this activity. Intelligence men believe they operate through sympathisers in left-of-centre political parties and friendly hillmen in the border areas. The use of Tibetan graziers to keep an eye on the Indian troop movements is a common tactic.

With so much to keep under watch the Indian side seems quite grossly inadequate. The IB, under the Home Ministry, looks after internal security and counter-espionage within the country. RAW handles external espionage. Special bureaux run by all state police which, besides doing the dirty work of political bosses also maintain counter-intelligence wings, including the registration bureaux. In addition there are wings of the armed forces, the Security Force (BSF), the Central Police Force (CRPF) and other paramilitary groups like the Assam Rifles and the Tibetan Border Police have their own intelligence wings.

Mistaking Job: But counter-espionage is the responsibility of the IB. Its headquarters in New Delhi contains a fairly sizeable counter-espionage network. It also has officers in sensitive border areas where large defence installations and arms factories are located. IB operations in their job is more painstaking than in other areas. Normally IB operations consist of watching on foreign missions, particularly those of Pakistan, China, the US, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom besides the two Koreas, Iraq and Iran. The last four are relatively recent additions to the IB's main concern is to prevent espionage and carrying out operations against each other. Said a RAW officer: "In this field we have coordinated

well. That is why we were able to send back planes loaded with Irani and Iraqi guerrillas, out to kill each other, on the eve of NAM." IB sleuths also keep in regular touch with the Delhi Police Special Branch which too runs a counter-espionage wing. In any case the IB has no powers to arrest and prosecute and once a suspect is identified the case is handed over to the police.

Normal Strategy: Sources explain that the IB style of functioning is based on the conventional strategy of keeping as wide a surveillance as possible and then filing and analysing every small bit of information. Specific operations are launched only when

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information points to someone, as was the case with Larkins. Then begins the even slower process of collecting evidence and trapping the suspect with planted material. Said a retired police officer: "We are often handicapped by the loopholes in the Official Secrets Act and the conventional attitude of Indian judges. Thus months and months have to be put in to collect evidence worthy of securing conviction."

From this point of view one of the IB's and Delhi Police's more successful cases was the conviction in May of Robert John, a Pakistani spy, for 27 years running on various charges of spying and smuggling. Often, the IB men have to resort to old-fashioned gimmicks like stationing agents as *paniwallas* or ice-cream sellers in front of the missions of target countries. Said an operative: "We try to be as discreet as possible, but in some cases, like perhaps with Pakistan where it is considered useful to even cause some harassment, we even resort to bumper-to-bumper chases. Give the man a run for his money."

But, tragically, bureaucratic inefficiency and politics has not left even this vital aspect of security untouched. As such, in the IB just one deputy director (with the rank of a deputy inspector general of police) runs the desk looking after Pakistan, the Gulf and practically all the Islamic countries. The deputy director looking after China has almost all socialist countries in his charge. In fact, just four deputy directors look after the entire world. Interestingly, of the two posts of joint directors (with the rank of

inspector general of police) leading the counter-intelligence effort, one has been lying vacant for nearly six months now.

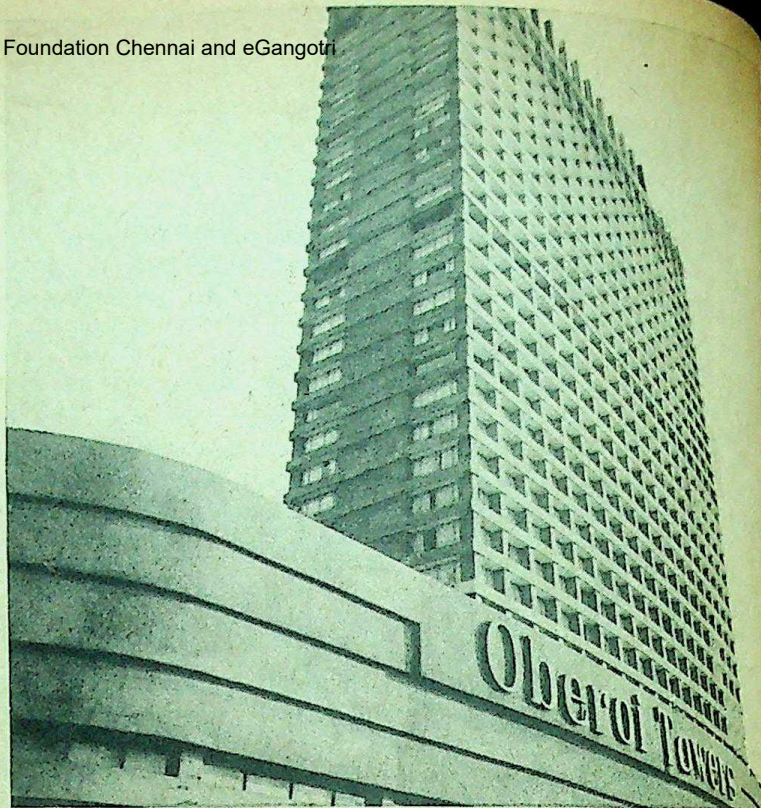
But what makes the whole system so weak and vulnerable is not just the inadequacy of the IB. Over the years, new intelligence agencies have mushroomed haphazardly with overlapping charters. The result is confusion. In fact the decline of the IB, like that of RAW and the other agencies began in right earnest with the Emergency when all of them got involved in the quagmire of political intrigue and carrying out extra-professional errands for the ruling party.

Falling Standards: While Morarji's moralistic doubts had a role to play the post-Emergency decline of the Indian intelligence agencies is more a tale of falling standards among the officer cadre, careeristic intrigue and confusion with every agency stepping into the other's domain. The one-upmanship in which the leaders of the various agencies began to increasingly indulge in the post-Emergency period to please their respective bosses often led to undercutting much to the detriment of the national interest. Said a retired Home Ministry official: "The rot set in when RAW was allowed to set up bureaux inside the country even though the IB charter clearly included counter-espionage." This resulted in a total free-for-all with RAW, given its better financial resources, trying to lure sources cultivated by the IB for years.

As such the state police special bureaux and the IB's state units, the subsidiary intelligence bureaux are always locked in competition over these. Alongside, with the increase in the authority of the Cabinet Secretariat that runs RAW and fall in the standards of its own leadership the IB found itself playing a truly subsidiary role, confined to domestic political intelligence and reducing itself, in the bargain, to some kind of an information bureau, competing with UNI and PTI in trying to be the first to inform the Home Ministry of a major development. Says an IB officer: "The problem is, we are an agency that no longer strives to predict an event and then take credit for having done so correctly. We are happy now only if we can tell Delhi five minutes ahead of others of a bomb explosion, derailment, air crash or political defection. A consequence was the bungle over JP's death that never was." Quipped another: "At this rate we should begin employing professional news agency men."

Increasingly, the IB came to be used for all kinds of things including collecting weekly reports on the price situation in all parts of the country. T.V. Rajeshwar, the last director of the IB, even employed officers with economics backgrounds to "analyse" these reports and present "assessments" for the user economic ministries. Said an IB offi-

TISCO



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TATA STEEL

What hard intelligence work can we do we are always under pressure for keeping the *dal* prices?"

The "newsy" orientation of the intelligence agencies was reflected most ridiculously following the Ershad coup in Bangladesh last year, each agency claimed to be the first to have informed Delhi of the coup. In fact at a high-level meeting in the officials of some of the agencies openly contested each other's claim. Each source was Bangladesh television, followed by the outposts in the North-east.

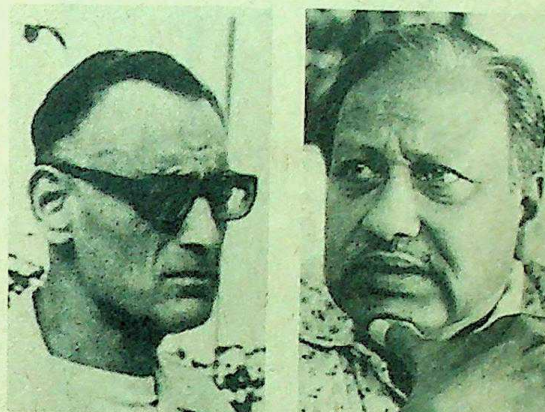
Confused Agencies: It is in disturbed areas like the North-east and Punjab that unnecessary competition and duplication manifest themselves with telling. Said a high-ranking police officer in insurgent-infested Imphal: "Very third-rate source takes Rs 50 from some third-rate information and is much from the SIB. Then he procures two bottles of rum from the imported watch from the BSF, a of hundred rupees from the richer and more rum from the Assam (Manipur Rifles, CRPF and the SSB Services Bureau) for the same information. In our zeal to guard our source, we never take each other into confidence. But the army launches an operation on this piece of information as it seems to confirm it, and hits the same syndrome now affects intelligence-gathering in Punjab.

In fact RAW's larger budget makes every agency feel like a poor cousin. Said an intelligence officer: "RAW may not have licence to kill. But they certainly have licence to bill as much as they like." Reference is to RAW's annual, unaudited bill of Rs 70 crore for clandestine operations. RAW continues to meddle with operations. A tell-tale example was RAW's help to Cabinet Secretary C.R. Narayana Rao Sahib in carrying out a dialogue with AASU leaders. At one time aircraft of the Aviation Research Centre (ARC) even flew some agitation leaders' headquarters at Charbatia for the chagrin of other wings of the government dealing with the agitation. RAW has lately been joined by the defence intelligence free-for-all which, in the panic that followed the Sino-Indian case, set up Liaison Units (LU's) in the country. These were headed by officers in civvies and reported directly to the units' function was counter-espionage to ensure that another Samba did not place.

Over the years even these units have functioned as the civilian eyes and ears of the forces, often writing out their views on the political situation or

even sending in summaries of the state assembly proceedings. The clearest example of the confusion came again in the North-east when army intelligence men in Gauhati proudly told everyone that they had captured a ranking officer of the Salvation Army, only to retreat shamefacedly when told that it was no insurgent outfit.

Early Days: Much of the weakness of the Indian intelligence system is due to the fact that it had a late and faltering start under B.N. Malik, the mercurial policeman put in charge of the incipient intelligence bureau in 1950 who left 15 years later after building a strong, widespread, if sometimes erratic and autocratic outfit. In fact when



Kao (left) and Nair: veteran RAW hands

Malik first approached Nehru he initially argued that India could not join such an unethical free-for-all.

To Nehru's mind the very idea of using diplomats as spies was abhorrent. But he was persuaded into changing his mind later by Girija Shankar Bajpayee, the then foreign secretary who told Nehru: "In all my visits abroad I have not seen one embassy that can be called Caesar's wife. I know ambassadors who are spies." The formation of the Indian intelligence network in the early '50s coincided with the increased American interest in Tibet. The first IB operatives were sent to the CIA for training.

The IB's early operations were concentrated in Tibet and Pakistan and it succeeded in informing the Government in time of the Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin and the building of a highway through the virgin barren territory. The scope of operations widened later with the increasing Chinese hostility as the CIA became a full-fledged partner of the IB which grew phenomenally in the post-1962 period. Up came the SSB under which almost the entire border population along Tibet in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Assam was armed, indoctrinated and trained to fight against the Chinese in case the latter again broke through the main Indian army defences.

In the thickly wooded hills at Chakrata

near Mussoorie came up the headquarters of the Special Frontier Force (SFF) where, led by Major-General Sujana Singh Uban, Indian and US experts trained over 10,000 Tibetan youths in guerrilla warfare. Close on its heels came the most hush-hush of all the secret outfits, the ARC, once again an ambiguously named organisation meant to carry out spy flights over Tibet (see box).

New Set-up: The first director of the ARC was a tall Kashmiri from Allahabad called Rameshwar Nath Kao whom Malik considered a promising prospect. And, shortly after his exit it was Kao who persuaded the Government that the IB had become burdened with too many responsibilities and carved out RAW, meant exclusively for external intelligence. For Kao it was not just a move from one deceptively-named organisation to another as he set about selecting the best in the land, buying the most expensive spy equipment all over the world and, in a short while, built up a classy outfit that proved its mettle in the Bangladesh war.

But it was the haphazard growth in the latter stages, politicisation of the agencies during and after the Emergency and the sudden advent of trade unionism during the Janata Party rule that put Indian intelligence into reverse gear. Today, besides the confusion, overlapping and politicisation they are also plagued by widespread frustration among the employees over pay, promotions and postings besides the never-ending tussle between officers on deputation from the Indian Police Service and the direct recruits. In spite of stringent action the agencies have been unable to contain trade-unionism. Significantly, the various agencies' overlapping charters render it impossible, in case of a blunder, to fix the responsibility on any one agency.

It is these gaps that make our security armour so porous to the Larkinses and the resourceful foreign powers employing them. And with the relative vulnerability of the former defence officers in the murky arms business to manipulation India becomes even easier prey to the machinations of foreign spies.

Fortunately, the Government seems aware of it and awaits the recommendations of K. Sankaran Nair, the high-profile former director of RAW who is now conducting a thorough cadre review of the intelligence organisations to remove frustration among the operatives. He will also say how these should be reorganised to function without overlapping or confusion. But till that happens India will remain, to borrow from Le Carre, a veritable playground for the "traitor, smuggler, soldier, spy".

—DILIP BOBB and SHEKHAR GUPTA

DCM LIMITED

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 95th Annual General Meeting of your company.

We have maintained a dividend of 15 per cent on equity share capital. However, in order to do so, we have had to add back the depreciation provision of previous years. This has been necessitated by certain set-backs, that the company suffered in recent years. I would like to take you into confidence in regard to the causes of these set-backs, as well as the inherent strengths and achievements of your company.

Background

For some years now, there has been a feeling that the textile units of the company have been a drag on its overall performance. I am happy to report that presently there is definite evidence of improvement in the company's textile operations. Whereas, three years ago, four of our five textile mills were making losses, three have now started showing profits. Not only that, it is a matter of satisfaction that our newest unit could be ranked among the most profitable mills in the country. This achievement has taken place in spite of the fact that the textile industry as a whole in the last several years has been suffering from continuous cost escalation and severe recession, which you must be aware of from the newspapers. A large number of mills in the country have become sick or have closed down. The remaining two textile mills of your company still pose a problem. Every effort is being made to improve the working of these units. Unfortunately, labour indiscipline, apart from the general recession in the industry, has been responsible for their malaise.

Our fertiliser and PVC operations in Kota, which form the largest part of the company's investment, have suffered due to recession and power shortage during the last four years. Fortunately, the



Dr. Bharat Ram

decline in their performance has now been stemmed by concerted management efforts, as well as the installation of a power plant.

The company's sugar operations, and chemical and food operations in Delhi remain models of managerial efficiency, and have provided stable support to the overall financial health of the company.

Management Focus

The improvements referred to above are not purely random events. Behind them has gone an immense amount of soul-searching and timely analysis, and decision-making in regard to modernisation, staffing and reduction of redundant overheads. This process started some time ago, and should show results in the near future. In this connection, I would like to mention the contribution of our Management Training Schemes, which are among the oldest and most prestigious in the country. These schemes, which are directed towards professionalisation of management, took root in your company much before the establishment of the Institutes of Management in Ahmedabad

and Calcutta. It is a matter of pride that DCM continues to attract some of the brightest minds in the country, and it is equally a matter of pride that some of the men, who joined us as trainees more than a decade ago, now occupy senior management positions.

Labour Philosophy

The labour practices in most parts of the country are subject to an element of arbitrariness. Fortunately, this is not the case in your company. Lala Shri Ram's labour philosophy with its representation of a labour director on the Board of the company, among other legendary practices, has made us the beneficiary of his unique vision. In this connection, the Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations & Human Resources, which was established almost two decades ago, and ranks as one of the premier research centres in the country, continues to provide a body of tested concepts and ideas to managers not only within the company, but in the country as a whole. The benefit of association of this Centre with our company's labour policies is indeed a major asset.

Outlook towards Modern Technology

DCM's thrust towards modern technology began in the late sixties, and was spurred on by the benefits derived from DCM's association with the Shriram Institute for Industrial Research. Consequently, the company is now involved in the development of polymers, new catalysts, irradiation technology, as well as the development of fire retardant fibres. The diversification into fields like computer process controls and automotive foundries, which began around this time, is now well established. The R & D efforts in our Electronics Division have led to the export of software, production and marketing of Indian language computers, and micro-processor based controls for energy saving in power plants, alongside the Galaxy and

Speech by Dr. Bharat Ram, Chairman at the Annual General Meeting of the Company held on November 25, 1983 at New Delhi.

...spectrum range of computers. Each of
...company's units now does its own
...processing on computers, in order
...to promote economy, efficiency and
...controls. The automotive foundry
...Ropar, which came up as the
...country's first jobbing unit of its size and
... sophistication, is ranked as one of the
... most modern in the country. This
... foundry will, in addition, supply
... sophisticated castings to the new DCM
... light commercial vehicles project.
... will also benefit from the exchange
... technical information on foundry
... the Board of Technology between Japan and India.

Perspectives for the Future

...outlook for the future, in brief, will
...size modernisation and
...ification of the present operations.
... Chemicals Division is exploring
...ification possibilities in high
... technology areas of speciality chemicals,
... for the electronics, rubber and
... industries. The Computer Division
... ready in negotiation with Control
... Corporation of America for
... participation in the manufacture of
... sophisticated peripherals and large size
... computers. The Foundry Division is
... into the possibilities of setting
... aluminium die casting facilities, which
... find a ready market in the wake of
... general boost in the Indian
... automobile industry.

...perspectives, ladies and gentlemen,
... clear and our feet are firmly planted
... ground, despite storms of varying
... from various directions in the
... past. This only proves the
... strength of your company.

General Scene

...I would like to say a few words about
... economic scene, since no
... can operate in isolation from
... overall economic and political
... in the country. In spite of
... by the Government and the
... recession and inflation
... simultaneously. The G.N.P.
... to be at a very low level. Some

of the major industries, like jute and
textiles, are in a state of chronic
depression.

Agriculture

In spite of a bumper crop in agricultural
production, demand continues to be
sluggish. However, we seem to have
reached a plateau in our agricultural
output. So much so, that we are still
having to import foodgrains. Our whole
economy depends on our agriculture,
and it is imperative that urgent steps are
taken to improve agricultural production
by increasing productivity per acre. We
often talk of importing industrial
technology from the developed countries,
but to my mind, it is important that we
also, if necessary, import agricultural
technology. Our agricultural scientists
have done a most commendable job, but
the fruits of their research have not
percolated to the small farmers, and this
is more a matter of management than
technology.

Infra-structure

In the industrial sector, infra-structure
shortages, particularly power, still
continue. It is not so much a question of
the peak availability of power, but its
continuous and stable supply. Apart
from setting up new plants, to my mind,
it is much more a matter of management
and discipline amongst various sections
of operatives.

Balance of Payments

The balance of payment position
continues to be a source of anxiety. We
cannot now depend on international
sources of finance. This is evident from
the reaction of various countries to
augment the resources of International
Monetary Fund and the World Bank. We
would, therefore, have to depend on our
own ability to earn enough foreign
exchange to become independent of
foreign assistance. In this regard, we
must, as quickly as possible, modernise
our industry to improve our quality, as
well as reduce cost of manufacture to be
able to export more.

Taxes and Interest Rates

As I mentioned last year, to keep
technology up-dated, the companies are
finding it difficult to replace their assets,
because of high cost of replacement and
the low rate of depreciation. It has been
represented to the Government often
enough that more and more industries
could become sick, if the Government's
depreciation and taxation policies are
not liberalised. Several countries have
devised systems of inflation accounting
in the matter of depreciation. With such
existing high rates on deposits, it is very
difficult for the companies to find risk
capital. I have been saying for long time
that we need to bring down our interest
rates, because high interest rates compete
directly with return on equity capital.
I have always maintained that the
excise duties on most of the items of
consumption need to be reduced. This
would not only give a fillip to increase
production and employment, but would
also reduce the price to the consumer. In
the long run, the Government's revenues
would also not suffer, as the volume of
consumption would increase. I hope,
the Government would give due
consideration to some of these problems
affecting the economy.

Before I close, I would like to thank all
our workers and staff for the devoted
manner in which they have worked
throughout the year.

*Note : This does not purport to be a
record of the proceedings of the
Annual General Meeting.*

DCM

BY-ELECTIONS

A Mini Rehearsal

BY-ELECTIONS do not make or break governments. But the string of by-elections on December 23 to three Lok Sabha seats and 11 assembly seats in five states—Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and West Bengal—will signal a message beyond the immediate results themselves. For Mrs Gandhi it is her first chance to really gauge the mood of the electorate in the crucial northern India region which has been shaken by the tallow controversy, and it will probably help her decide whether she should plunge into an early general election. On the other side of the fence, the Opposition is getting its first opportunity to see if its newly formed alliances will carry conviction with the electorate.

Apart from that, the fate of several political heavyweights is also hanging in the balance. Bihar Chief Minister Chandra Shekhar Singh is trying to enter the state assembly from Banka. Two former chief ministers—Devi Lal of Haryana and Banarsi Das of Uttar Pradesh—are also standing for election to the Lok Sabha. Says Mulayam Singh Yadav, the chief of the Uttar Pradesh unit of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA): "These elections are not ordinary by-elections. Each one of the political parties will come to know its real strength and weaknesses."

Splintered Opposition: If multi-cornered contests really favour the Congress(I), then the ruling party could hardly have asked for more. In practically every constituency it faces a splintered opposition. The Janata, Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), CPI, CPI(M), Jagjivan Ram's Congress(J) and the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch have all filed their nominations in eight of the 11 assembly seats and the three Lok Sabha seats. A typical example of the kind of contests that are taking place is in the Bulandshahr Lok Sabha constituency which was held by the Lok Dal. The Janata Party's Banarsi Das is pitted against opponents from both the Lok Dal and the Congress(I). The position is the same in Bettiah, in Bihar where Janata Party candidate Mangal Yadav squared off against the Lok Dal's Fazlur Rehman, a former Union minister, and the Congress(I)'s Manoj Pandey, who is the son of former state chief minister Kedar Pandey. In Sonapat the Janata's Devi Lal is in a multi-cornered fight. Admits DSP MP Harikesh Bahadur: "It is unfortunate for us that we could not avoid the multi-cornered against the Congress(I). If the Congress(I) wins nobody else but us should be blamed for it."

The BJP, however has its own views on

multi-cornered contests. Says Lal Krishan Advani, the party general secretary: "Our past experience shows that a triangular contest has always helped the Opposition. No one wants to waste his vote on a candidate who has least chances of winning. This talk of opposition votes being divided is only academic." Whether Advani's theory is right or wrong, the NDA is going full steam ahead, fighting the most number of seats after the Congress(I)—all the three Lok Sabha seats



Chandra Shekhar



Devi Lal



Banarsi Das



and nine assembly seats. Of these the BJP has been allocated only two of the five assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh and one in West Bengal. The Lok Dal is fighting all three Lok Sabha seats and five assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Conflicting Claims: Prospects of a united opposition were dim right from the start. The United Front insisted on a proportional allocation of seats amongst the opposition parties in the interests of unity. The NDA, on the other hand, claimed all the seats but one on the ground that its constituents had either won or were runners-up in every constituency where elections are being held.

For example, two of the three Lok Sabha seats—Sonapat and Bulandshahr—were held by the Lok Dal while its ally, the Janata Party's Fazlur Rehman came second in Sonapat and Manoj Pandey in the Bettiah parliamentary constituency. Of the assembly seats too, the United Front held four of the 10 seats in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Says V.K. Singh, secretary of the NDA: "There is no question of giving any seat to the United Front partners because none of them has any base or a suitable constituency. If they are interested in electoral victories they should realise their weaknesses and refrain from making inflated claims." Retorts Ram Vilas

general secretary of the Janata Party. "We were always willing to talk across the fence on each and every issue. In politics, unproven ideas and notions don't work. The opposition should be open-minded."

The NDA's refusal to share seats with the United Front did not prevent the latter from forging an opposition alliance. Biju Patnaik of the ball rolling by inviting Lok Dal's Charan Singh and Janata Party's Chaudhary drashekhar to his house for dinner. Singh accepted the invitation but was prodding from Lok Dal General Secretary Shyam Nandan Misra, but refused to deal with the Janata Party without the BJP into confidence. Later, the NDA

three parties that it would welcome unconditional support from the United Front.

That was, however, not the last effort to bring the two fronts together. Sharad Pawar, former Maharashtra chief minister made a scheduled trip to New Delhi last fortnight to hold talks with Atal Behari Vajpayee and Charan Singh. Pawar also tried to get the Janata Party's claims to only two Lok Sabha seats—one each in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. But, in the end his efforts were a cropper on the thorny question of the Lok Sabha seat. Charan Singh was adamant that Devi Lal, who holds the seat, should withdraw from the contest as he had opted for the Lok Dal ticket. Devi Lal and

to defeat the Congress(I) and not to cut into each other's votes."

The divisions in the Opposition do not end there. Several parties which are supposed to be constituents or allies of the United Front have put up candidates regardless of their alliances. One of the worst cases is Fazilnagar assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh where the Congress(I) faces candidates from the CPI, CPI(M), Janata, the Congress(J), the Congress (S) and the Lok Dal plus five other independents.

Oddly enough, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna of the DSP who was recently elected leader of the United Front parliamentary group is either putting up his own candidates

the voters? Chandrashekhar is chief of the United Front but he and his colleagues will speak against our candidates in Uttar Pradesh."

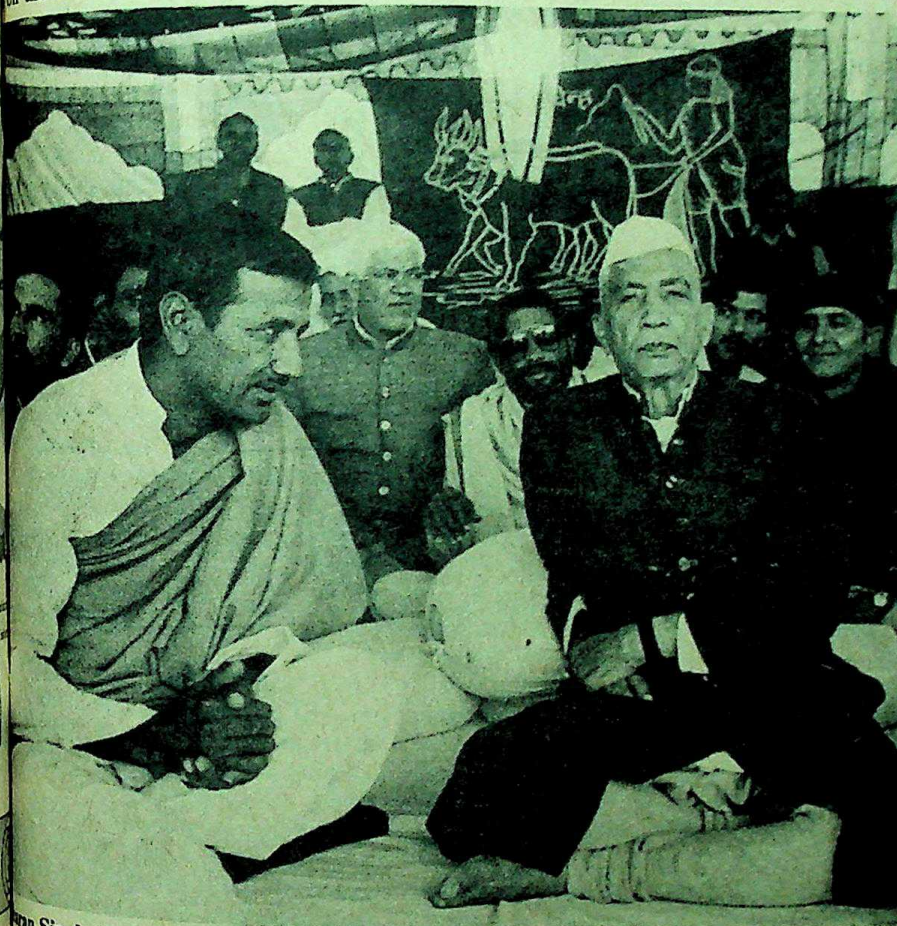
Good Auguries: The divisions in the Opposition can only augur well for the ruling party. The outcome of these elections will obviously influence the timing of the next general elections. In fact, many feel that the Congress(I) only wanted elections in carefully chosen constituencies so that it could get a feel of which way the wind was blowing in the north. Political observers also point out that the Election Commission has ordered elections to the three Lok Sabha seats and 11 assembly seats even though 13 Lok Sabha seats and 19 assembly seats are vacant.

The commission defends its actions on the plea that it acts on the state government's behest. Thus, it conceded the Bihar Government's request for elections in the Banka assembly constituency which fell vacant only two months ago but has made no effort to hold elections in two assembly seats in Tamil Nadu and Kerala which have been vacant since August because the state governments have not asked for elections. The general consensus is that the Government was particularly keen on holding elections in the northern states to see if the beef tallow controversy had done any damage. Since a large number of Muslims will also be voting, the elections will also give a chance to find out whether the Congress(I)'s hold on the minorities is slipping.

The elections will also give the ruling party some clue as to which way the wind is blowing in Uttar Pradesh, which has traditionally carried enormous clout in the making and unmaking of political fortunes including those of the Gandhis. The elections will also be a verdict on the performance of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Sripath Misra. Says Sukhdev Prasad, UPCC(I) president: "People are with the Congress(I) and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Everybody knows that only she can keep the country together and provide a strong government. We will win in all the constituencies."

The Opposition is also bound to feel the reverberations of the voter's decision. A decisive victory will boost its sagging morale no end, and conversely a defeat will be a severe blow. It will also reveal whether the NDA or the United Front is stronger in the north. And if they suffer a heavy defeat, both sides may be forced to introspection and a more flexible stand. Says Suresh Kalmadi, secretary, Congress(S) parliamentary group: "I wish they would lose the elections so that they will realise their strength and not continue in politics on their inflated personal egos." The way things are going, there is a good chance that this may happen

—PRABHU CHAWLA



Charan Singh (right) with NDA candidate K.S. Malik in Sonapat: prestigious contest

Janata supporters wanted the Lok Dal to withdraw in favour of a more acceptable common candidate. Charan Singh scorned such ideas, scuttling the possibility of any unity between the NDA and the United Front.

NEW PEOPLE were surprised at this turn of events. Charan Singh is keen to prove that he is the undisputed leader of the rural peasantry in the north. "I wish I had succeeded in bringing both the NDA and the Janata leadership more accommodating towards the United Front. After all our primary objective is

or is supporting CPI candidates in six of the nine assembly seats which the United Front is contesting. The DSP fell out with the Janata Party when its plea for three of the five assembly seats in the state was turned down. The DSP points to the fact that under the agreement worked out at the United Front conclave in Bangalore, the Janata Party was to contest Bulandshahr and two assembly seats of Siswa and Madhogarh, the CPI, Fazilnagar and Tindwari and the DSP, Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh. But, this, they say, was not honoured when the elections finally came around. Says a young DSP MP: "Who are we trying to take for a ride—ourselves or

TAX RAID

A Matter of Trust

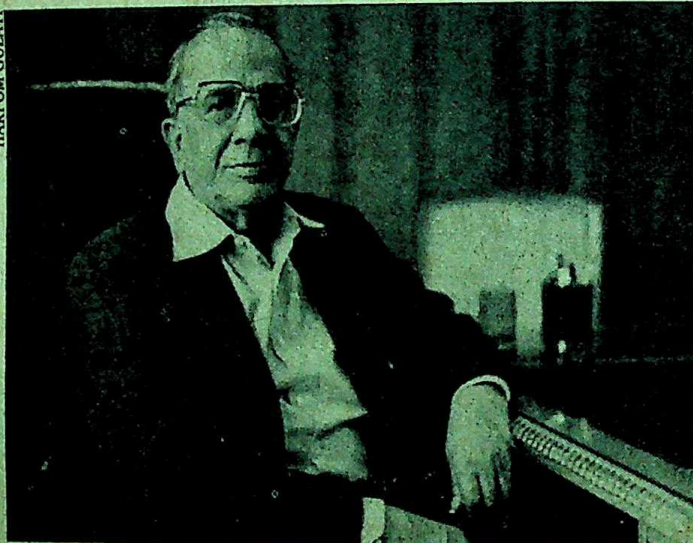
FROM the start, the raid on industrialist Charat Ram's residence in late November promised to be big news. First, because of the prominence of the industrialist involved (Charat Ram being a member of the Shriram family, which controls DCM—the country's fifth largest conglomerate—and a dozen other companies), then because of the sums involved in the affair (Rs 1.21 crore) and finally because of the nature of the charges: donations to trusts in order to claim tax exemptions, with the "donations" being deposited in unauthorised bank accounts and then withdrawn in cash by the people involved in the racket.

The event was special for other reasons too. Taxmen don't normally tip off journalists in advance about a raid. In this case, however, a dozen reporters from major newspapers and news agencies were informed a full two hours in advance, with the promise of a sensational story. And when, in another unexpected turn, the news was virtually blacked out by the capital's mainline press, taxmen continued to seek out journalists in order to ensure the maximum publicity.

Finally, in an unusually forthright statement in the Lok Sabha on December 12, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee named all the people involved but was curiously reticent about naming Charat Ram or even hinting at his involvement in any fashion. He also talked of the companies involved belonging to the "DCM group" although DCM has nothing to do with the matter. The two companies involved are Usha International and Industrial & Allied Sales (INALSA). Mukherjee mentioned two Pune trusts that had complained about the bogus donations, but did not mention that some donations had also been made to Dharendra Brahmachari.

Curious Response: The significance of this curious mix of publicity-seeking and reticence was not clear, although DCM's being dragged into the affair at a time when it is under stock market attack by Swraj Paul and therefore needs to keep its reputation unsullied, invited obvious insinuations. Mukherjee had also told the Lok Sabha that the Enforcement Directorate had started proceedings against one of the people involved—V. Mehra—but officials said this was completely untrue. Was Mukherjee then misleading the house?

The action started quietly enough, when two Pune-based trusts—the Hastimal Sancheti Memorial Trust and the Pune Medical Foundation—complained that a Vipin Mehra of Delhi (who claims to be a property dealer) was "collecting donations on their behalf without any authority to do so". Mehra's residence was searched in mid-September, Rs 1.5 lakh seized in foreign exchange, and the subsequent trail led to Charat Ram's two companies. Another involved as a "front man" was a schoolteacher-cum-astrologer, P.P. Verma. Mukherjee said in Parliament that the raids yielded Rs 85.2



Charat Ram: denying irregularities and keeping cool

lakh plus incriminating documents, while lockers were sealed. The total amount of bogus donations involved was Rs 1.21 crore.

Charat Ram himself seemed completely unconcerned by the whole affair. Present on the spot when the raid on his residence started, he left the same night on a two-week tour abroad (after being subjected to a body search before being allowed to leave the premises). On his return, he told INDIA TODAY that he was not worried by the charges. "Since the tax department cannot have any case against me, and has discovered no irregularities, I don't need to say anything," he argued. Nevertheless, he felt obliged to circulate a letter to his friends, laying out his side of the story.

This was that he had noticed two advertisements by the Pune trusts about people collecting money in their name without authorisation, that he discovered on checking out that his companies' donations to these trusts had not been reaching them, that he therefore contacted the person who had been collecting the donations (Mehra),

and that the people involved had acknowledged their responsibility in the matter. In fact had returned some of the money. He also stated that the companies had claimed any tax exemption on the basis of the donations—so that no tax evasion was involved.

Contradictions: The Government, however, has a significantly different interpretation of the course of events. A ten, unsigned press note issued on a sheet of paper shortly after the raid on Charat Ram's residence had stated that it was the Government which had started investigations after noticing the admissions by the Pune trusts, that the donations were "allegedly received back" after investigations started, and that these donations had not been found when extensive investigations were conducted at the premises of the people involved.

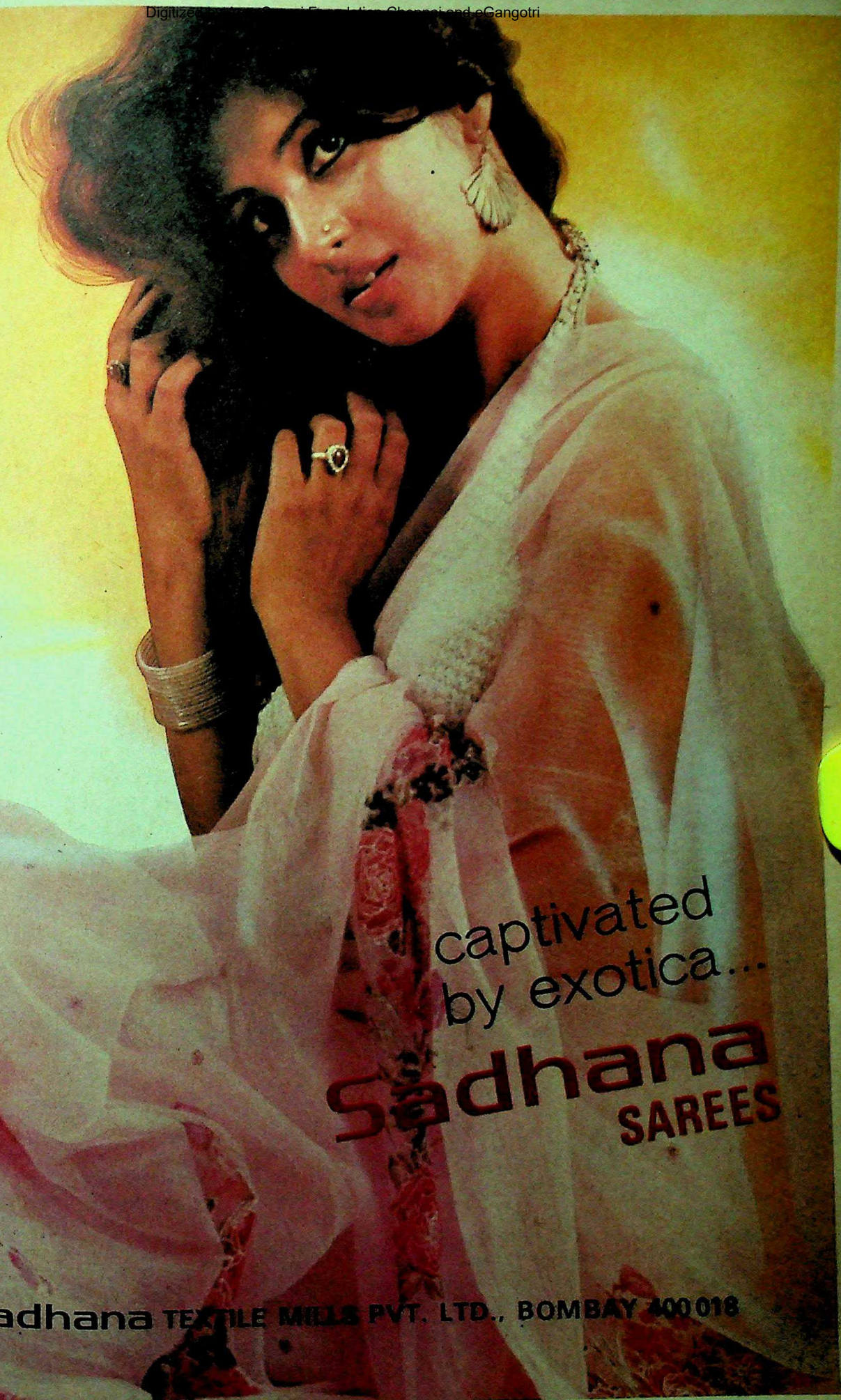
Several questions arise from the information made available from the start, who among the companies' top people are involved in siphoning off of funds in the form of bogus donations? Charat Ram claims innocence, and the taxmen have focussed their guns on Usha International, Prakash, who has been with Charat Ram all his working life, and risen from the post of assistant manager to executive director. Mukherjee in fact said in Parliament that "the executive director of Usha International... (was) involved in the racket". However, would a man with a long record of loyalty to his employer defraud his employer?

Second, the trusts involved have no link with the operations of the companies, and the donations involved are outsize in relation to the size of the companies' operations.

Charat Ram points out that the DCM group has always made donations to trusts, but the taxmen suspect that the money was more to the picture. Last fortnight, he made the following two lines of enquiry: one, how much money was in fact being used for pay-offs, including to some opposition politicians, and two, that the money was used to give undeclared payments to the group's senior employees. Taxmen say that some senior executives of the group have been making donations to some of the trusts, including Aparna Ashram.

At fortnight-end, the Government had to file a case or take any other action subsequent to the raids. In many such instances in the past, the raids and the publicity that accompanied them have led nowhere. It now remains to be seen whether, in this case, history will be repeated or made afresh.

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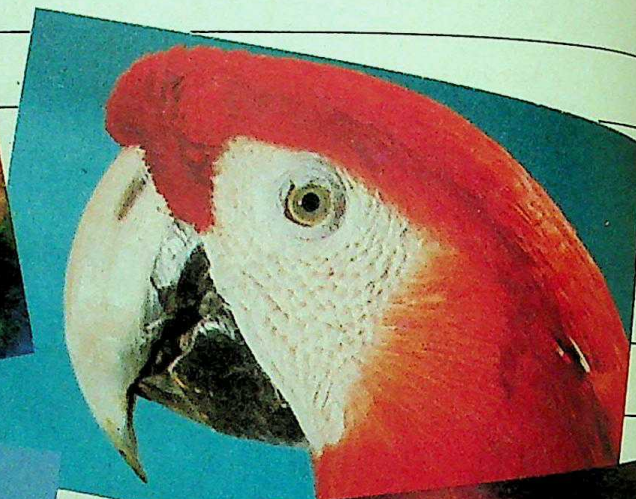
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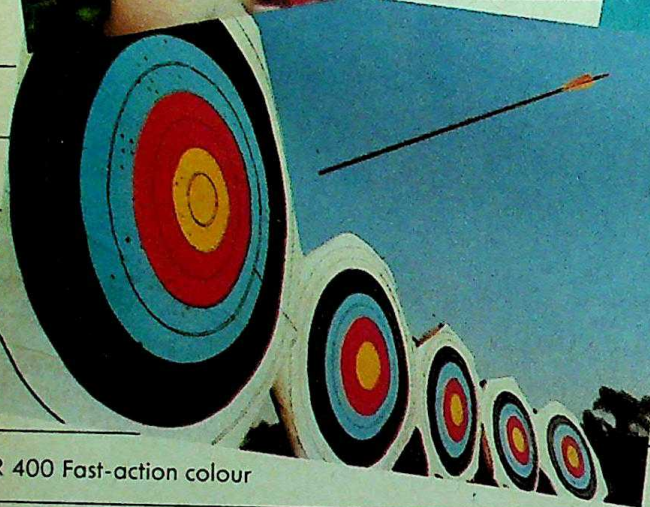
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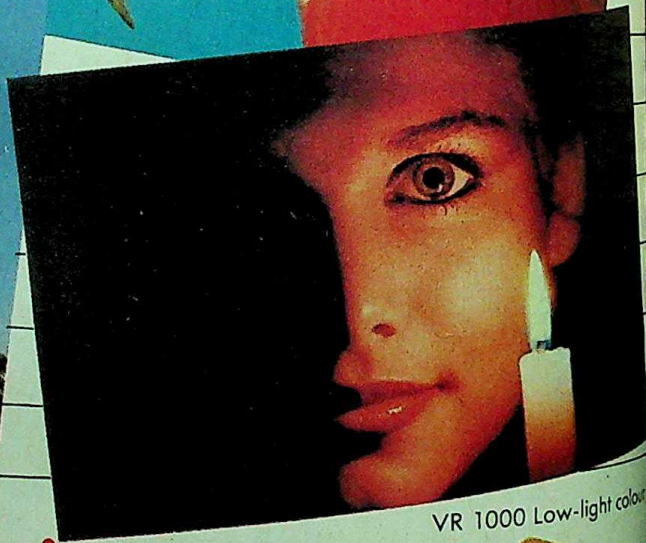
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DHIRENDRA BRAHMACHARI

Summons for the Swami

FOR SWAMI Dharendra Brahmachari, it was the experience of a lifetime—but none he would certainly like to forget as quickly as possible. Instead of senior police officers and powerful politicians flocking to his jet-age ashrams and offices, it was his turn to report to police stations to explain his alleged involvement in the illegal arms trade in Jammu & Kashmir. Over a harrowing fortnight, Brahmachari was subjected to grilling interrogation for nearly a week by Jammu & Kashmir police to complete their investigations in connection with the case registered against him on November 18 (INDIA TODAY, December 15). Back home in Delhi, the swami was spending more time with his lawyers than with his yoga students, to prepare his defence in a case which, among other things has been considerably harmed by the hitherto cordial relations between him and state Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. Brahmachari received a temporary reprieve when Chief Justice V. K. Khalid's judgement was indicative enough of the tortuous legal struggle that lies ahead of the flying swami. Not only was he barred from talking to the media, and leaving Jammu or Delhi without the permission of the state police, he was also directed to report regularly to the

police whenever summoned—without a lawyer in tow. Said Khalid while delivering his 12-page judgement: "If any of these conditions are violated by the petitioners, the state will be at liberty to move the court for the cancellation of the bail."

Meanwhile, the state Government moved quickly to strengthen its case. Farooq directed over a dozen senior police officers and the state Law Department to piece together the circumstances under which Brahmachari had succeeded in importing Spanish-made gun barrels and other components into Jammu & Kashmir and acquired huge areas of land for his ashrams in the state. In addition, the state Government recommended to the Central Government the cancellation of Brahmachari's gun manufacturing licence.

Forgery Theory: Even as police officers were questioning Brahmachari and his partners in Jammu, a high-powered detective team led by Senior Superintendent of Police Jaswant Singh camped in Delhi to gather information on the import of Spanish gun parts. During his 12-day stay, Singh met senior officials of the departments of home, commerce and customs and collected documents which had allowed Brahmachari and

Mohammad Afzal, owner of Khairuddin & Sons—also raided along with the swami's Shiva Gun Factory—to secure customs clearance for their consignments. The police were apparently operating on the theory that the import papers were allegedly forged by Brahmachari's office. According to the police, Brahmachari was entitled to only "parts of gun" but later the words "barrels and blanks" were added to the papers. Brahmachari, however, refuted these allegations as "baseless".

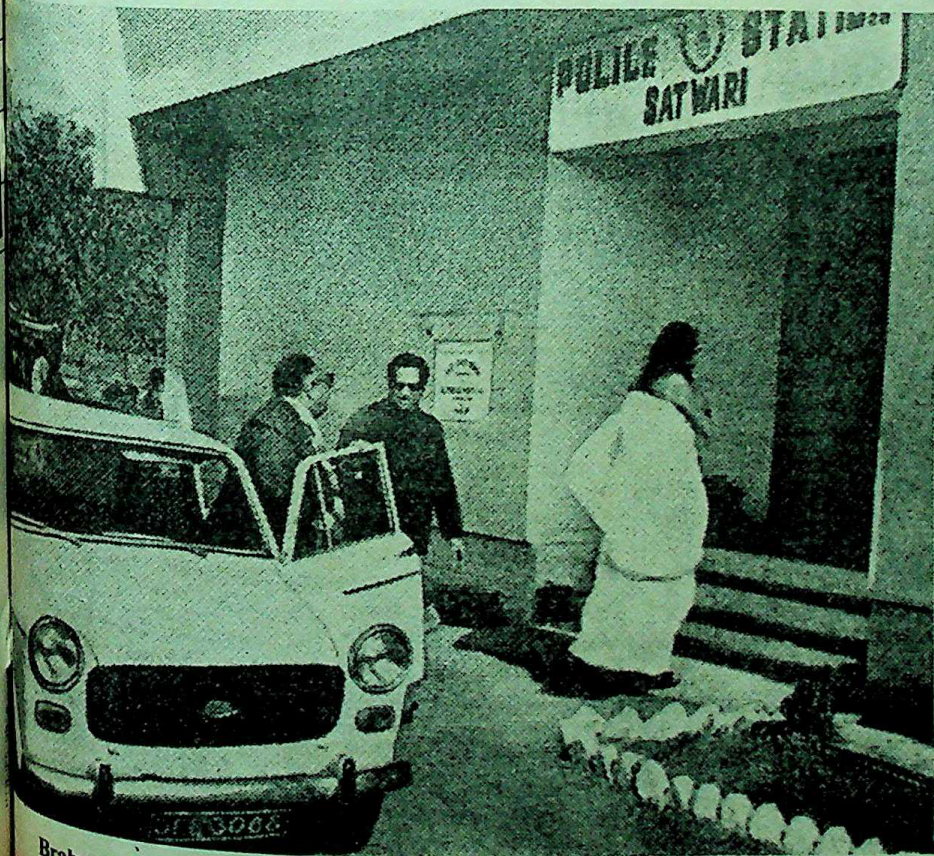
The Jammu & Kashmir police, nevertheless, persisted with the forgery theory. They seized Brahmachari's import code licence and sent it for chemical examination to the forensic laboratory. In fact, the entire prosecution case hinges on these documents. Said Deputy Inspector General of Police M.A. Nomani: "We are now busy piecing together all facts obtained from Brahmachari and the records seized from his factory."

Despite the deployment of generous amounts of manpower and resources, the local police could not file a charge-sheet against Brahmachari. According to legal experts, charge-sheets in such sensitive cases are normally filed within two weeks of the first information report being lodged. The police say that the delay was due to the work done in unravelling the process followed in getting the gun manufacturing licence, the allotment of industrial sheds and the import of Spanish components. Intelligence men were also looking into the possibility of state government officials being involved in the transactions.

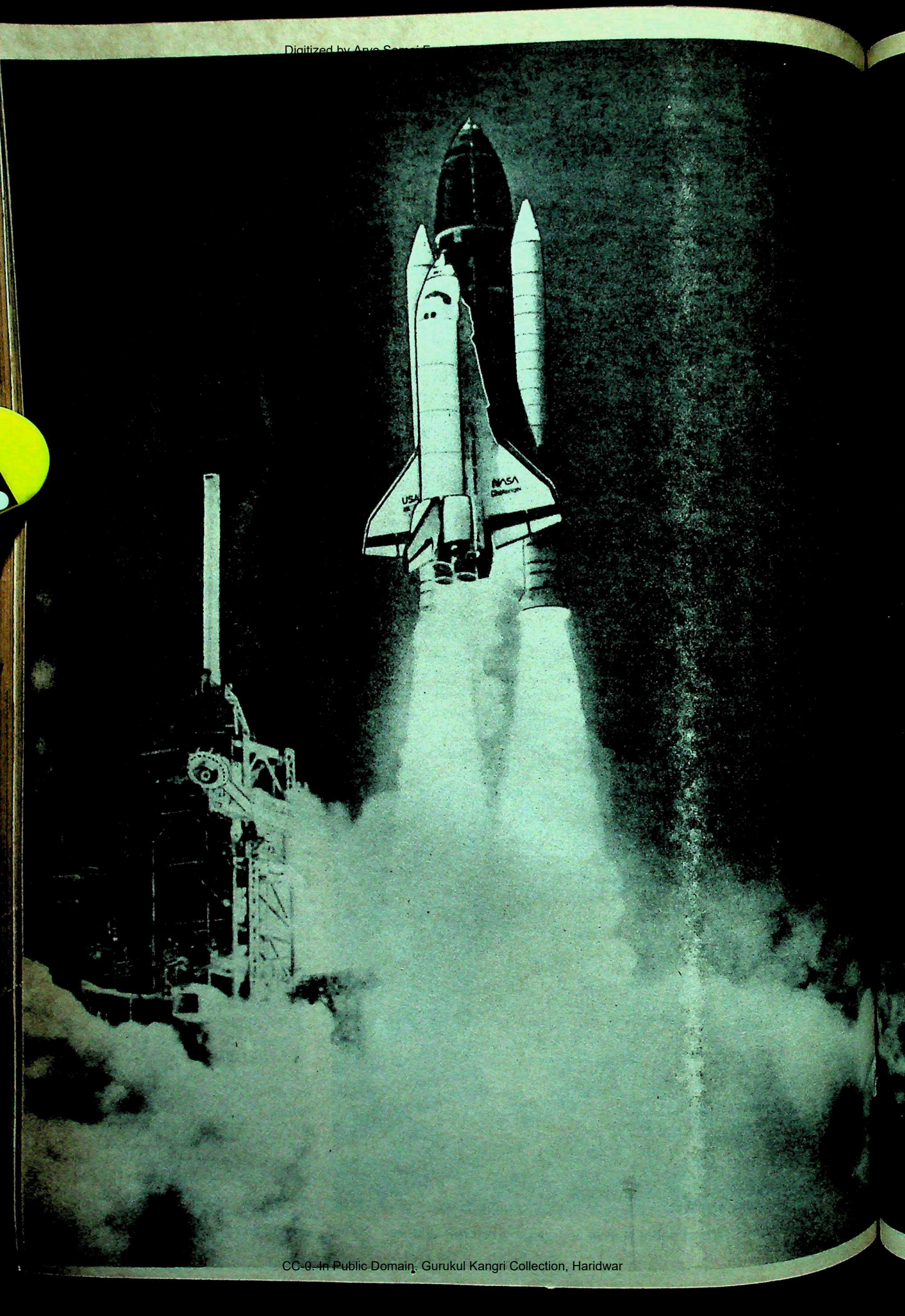
Land Dispute: The pressure on Brahmachari was not confined to criminal cases. State Law Minister P.L. Handoo rummaged through land revenue records to find out whether Brahmachari's land in the state was acquired through violations of the land laws. Last fortnight, Handoo disclosed that he had finished inquiries into the swami's land deals of 100 acres and, according to his investigation, Brahmachari has encroached on private land, as well as forest and grazing land. Asserted Handoo: "All this land will have to be declared state land as it is in violation of the state Agrarian Act."

The Brahmachari affair continued to cause rumbles in Parliament. On December 1, opposition members alleged in the Lok Sabha that the guns manufactured in the Shiva Gun Factory were being used by criminals in Delhi. Home Minister P.C. Sethi strongly denied this; Ramgopal Reddy, Congress(I) MP from Andhra Pradesh, described Brahmachari as "a great spiritual leader respected all over the world" and said that he was being unnecessarily maligned. The swami still has friends in high places—and he is going to need all of them in the long, hard days that stretch ahead.

—PRABHU CHAWLA



Brahmachari entering Satwari police station in Jammu: a reversal of roles



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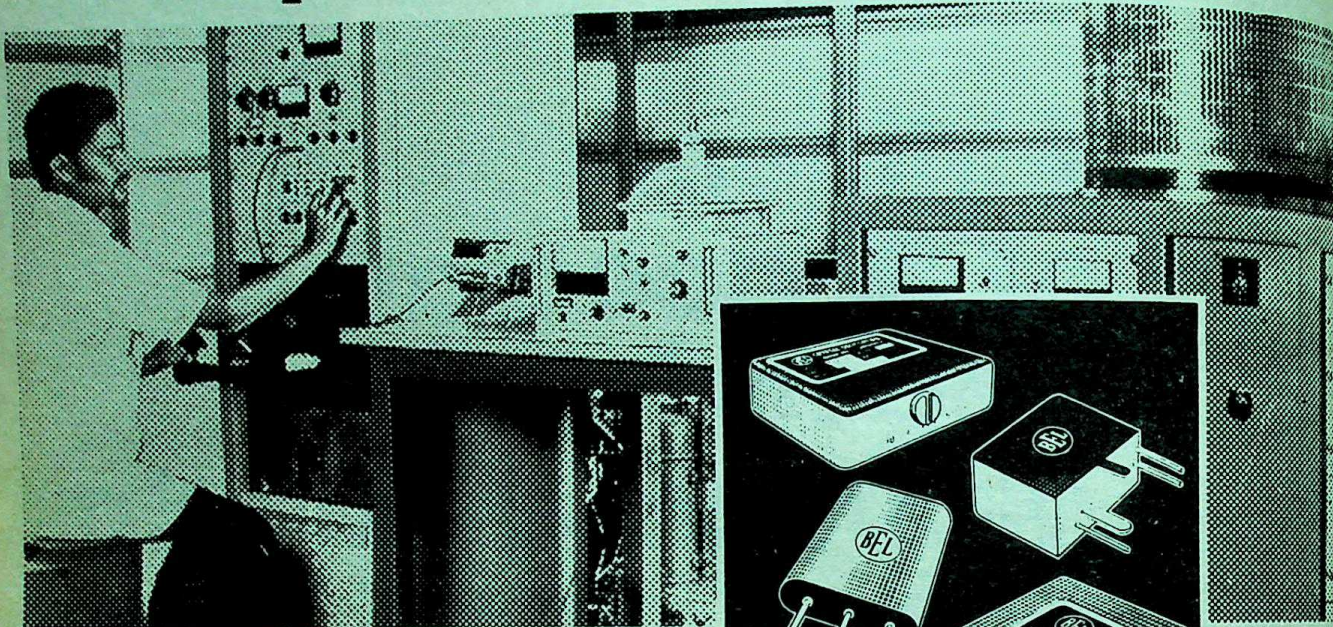
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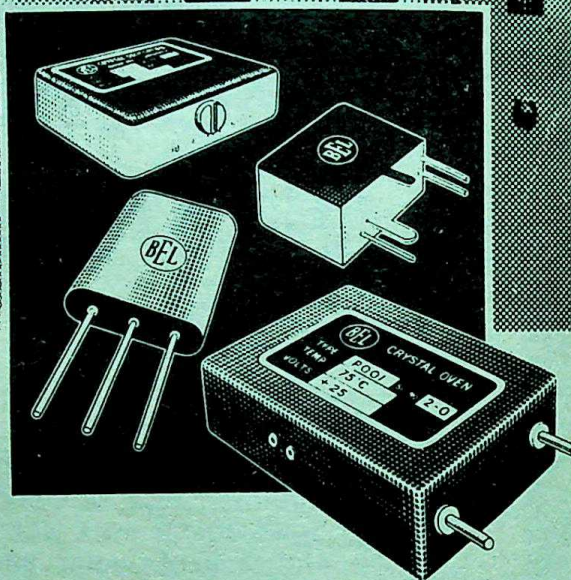


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MAHARASHTRA

Bloody Worship

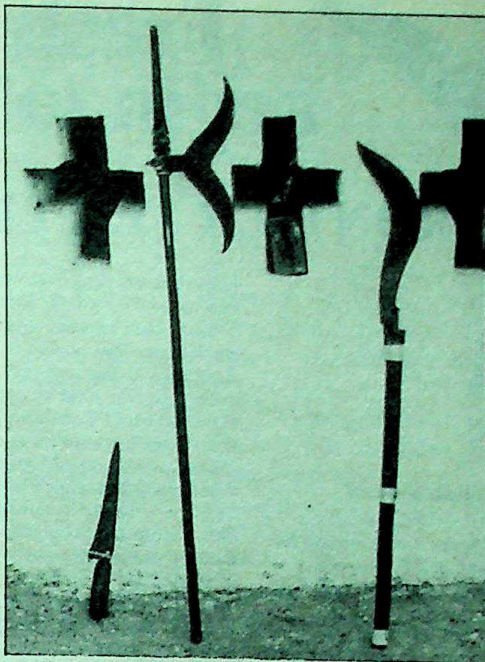
IN A country where cruelty is all too easily accepted, there are still events, like bride-burning and sati, which shock the mind. To this gory list was added another last fortnight when news broke

of a human sacrifice in Maharashtra, carried out with the meticulous observance of tribal rites. The 14-year-old Harijan victim, Madhav Pagade, was forcibly held as a sacrifice. The priest recited mantras, threw rice over him and stabbed him eight times—first behind the ears, then in the skull and finally in the back. As Madhav fell to his death, his blood was collected in a long, deep bamboo cup. Twenty days after the crime had been committed, deep in the forest of Bhamragarh in Garhchiroli district, the leaves at the site were still stained with clots of blood.

The ghastly crime in this remote part of Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, just off the border of Madhya Pradesh, took place on November 17, but came to national notice only last fortnight when the Government—reply to a question raised by an MLA—acknowledged the human sacrifice at Bhamragarh. Residents of the area reacted with horror and fear, dozens of parents quickly withdrew their children from the local government school where the victim had studied. Said Heshwant Madavi, sarpanch of Bhamragarh: "Nobody dares to go into the forests alone any more and there is a curse."

Madhav's murder may never have come to light but for the involvement of another 14-year-old schoolboy, Vasant Kondu, detected by his schoolteachers as being sly and mischievous. Vasant witnessed the entire bloody scene but when he saw how gory the thing was, he ran from the spot, screaming. The murderers caught hold of him and threatened him with his life if he as much as breathed a word. He later confessed after being thoroughly beaten by a schoolteacher. Madhav's body was found in a ditch just by the Pahlum Gautum river. If Vasant had not confessed, it is unlikely that in the thick teak forest, the body would ever have been recovered. Vasant's parents have since shifted to another village.

Prevalent Custom: For long there has been a hushed talk of human sacrifice among the tribals of the area, but this was the first time that there was any conclusive proof of the custom actually existing. Said Prakash Amte, son of Baba Amte, the revered social worker of the region: "I have been working in the area here for the last 10 years but this is the first time such a case has come to my



(Clockwise from top left) Implements for slaughtering animals, tribal idols and Madhav's parents: murderous rites

notice." The tribals, themselves—known as Madias—maintain that if there is any human sacrifice going on, then it is being performed by the Bastar tribals from adjoining Madhya Pradesh who cross into their area. Remarked a Naxalite deputy squad leader in Ettapally: "Our squad in Bastar tells us that the Bastar tribals accuse the Madias of Maharashtra of carrying on this custom in their region."

Whichever the guilty tribe, Vasant Shantaram Potdukhe, the local MP does admit that "human sacrifice while rare, has not been eradicated from the region". The problem is that it is normally very difficult to prove such sacrifices. Villagers are too terrified to report the matter and in any case there is no police post for miles around. Said K. Subramanyam, SP from Garhchiroli district: "By the time the police picks up rumours of any possible sacrifice, the body has long been

disposed of." For the police to keep track of anything in this remote interior—once known as "black water"—is difficult because of lack of roads, communication and a devastatingly high incidence of cerebral malaria. Only government servants under punishment are posted here.

Superstitious Villagers: Nature, too, sometimes conspires to strengthen the superstitions of these people. This year, in the Ettapally sector, which includes 90 villages in eastern Garhchiroli there have been at least six unnatural deaths although the normal average is only around one a year. By coincidence, Ettapally has also had the best harvest of the decade with a bumper crop after a bad drought last year. Animal sacrifice is even more common and everything, from cows to buffaloes to goats, are offered to the goddess. Because of the drought last year, all the 90 villages of Ettapally decided to hold a

Fresh infusions begin to yield results

ASSAM FRONTIER TEA LIMITED

Chairman's speech delivered at the Sixth Annual General Meeting.



MR. SURRENDRA PAUL

I welcome you to the Sixth Annual General Meeting to consider and approve the Report and Accounts for the 9 months ended March 31, 1983. The tea production in these 9 months has been 69.22 lakhs Kgs and we have sold 81.26 lakhs Kgs of tea for Rs. 14.28 crores. Exports were higher for this period. The pre-tax profit of the Company has almost tripled from Rs. 55.91 lakhs to Rs. 154.94 lakhs. The Board, therefore, has recommended a final dividend of 4% making a total of 12% for this 9 month period.

The financial year has been changed from July-June to April-March to ensure a more accurate accounting period. The Assam crop is produced mainly from April to December and almost all of it is sold within March of the following year. In fact the complete sales realisation is known by the time the Balance Sheet is prepared. The necessary permission from the Government for this changeover has been obtained and I think this will ensure a better accountability in the future.

ASSAM
FRONTIER

Dramatic Turnaround

Last year I promised you better managerial skills, a programme for cost reduction and improvement in the gardens and the factories. The programme was started in November 1982, so the impact of it was only partially available for the 9 months covered in the Balance Sheet; but the pattern has been set and the full impact will be realised in the year 1983-84 and onwards. There has been a tremendous upward trend in the price of tea since early this year and the Company will use this opportunity to earlier complete the development work that was needed. We hope to modernise in about three years what was planned for in five. Cost reduction still remains the paramount problem in the Tea Industry and no effort is being spared in this direction. Due to better agricultural practices, the crop should increase significantly this year and a massive effort is being made to improve the throughput of the factories. Every improvement is made with a view to ensure higher production at lower cost in the future.

It was originally estimated that it would take two or three years to turn the Company around. Fortunately the problems were assessed quickly and accurately so correction was fairly fast. The better prices have, of course, come as a lucky break which every good management needs. When we took over the Company the share price was Rs. 9.50, production and profits low and costs high. Since the takeover, the share price has more than doubled, the crops are up and the costs are reduced. The health of the Company is restored and the future is bright.

In my last address I had requested the State and Central Governments to look into a few problems of the Tea Industry but they have been rather busy with the affairs of State and could not devote time to them. Tea is a very major contributor to the economy of Assam and deserves the careful consideration of the State Government. I request them again to look into the housing

requirements of the tea workers and to take up jointly with the Central Government to ensure that the Income Tax and the Agricultural Tax together do not exceed the tax paid by other manufacturing Companies. There is no logical reason for the Tea Industry to be taxed higher than other manufacturing Companies. Besides these two requests, I hope that the State Government is aware that tea production has not really increased for the last several years. One of the best ways Government can help is by returning the land it had acquired under the Land Ceiling Act and not utilized. There can be no better use of land in Assam than the growing of tea to meet India's own consumption, earn valuable foreign exchange and provide vast employment in the State.

I have many people to thank: Mr. Dipak Roy and Mr. V. Dudeja for their interest and guidance at the Board level, Mr. S.N. Sharma and Mr. H.N. Banerjee for keeping Calcutta office running smoothly in spite of a small organisation, General Manager Mr. Amrit Sethi, the managers, assistants, staff and workers who quickly reshaped the Company into a cohesive group for achieving our target of increased production at reduced costs.

Caparo's Non-Resident Investments

As you know 74% of your Company belongs to the Caparo Group of the UK and since they and their Chairman, Mr. Swraj Paul, have been in the news constantly for the last few months, I would like to briefly recapitulate. Earlier this year, responding to a call by the Government of India for non-resident investment in the shares of Indian Companies through the Stock Exchanges, Caparo made substantial purchases of DCM and Escorts shares. The shares were purchased because of the deep attachment Mr. Swraj Paul feels for the country of his origin and because the investments were considered good. The shares were purchased from the floor of the Exchange and not surreptitiously through private negotiations.

As soon as it was known that the investor was Mr. Swraj Paul, the Managements of DCM and Escorts along with a few industrialists began behaving in an unbecoming way to an investor in these Companies. They launched a smear campaign and refused to

register the shares purchased. It soon became obvious that their fear emanated from their very small holdings in the Companies which they claim as their own. Further, the very idea of managing for 100% of the shareholders threatened their present attitudes and disproportionate gains.

The non-registration of shares has upset the working of the Stock Exchange and has done long-term damage to the Corporate Sector. A Share Scrip is a negotiable instrument, but for the first time on a large scale its sanctity has been challenged. If this is allowed, it means that a holder of shares can only sell shares to people approved by the incumbent managements. This will perpetuate managements that need not assure the good health of the Companies nor look after the interests of all the shareholders. The non-registration of shares has also scared away the non-residents who earlier came forward in a big way to invest in India, an act which would have largely solved the country's foreign exchange problems. This non-registration has also made India a defaulter because the international commitment that a non-resident Indian can buy and own shares, has not been honoured. It is now clear that some of our industrialists neither want competition from within or from without, and they would like to maintain the status quo which may not be in the public interest. In fact, it is this lack of competition which is leading to large scale sickness in industry.

The Caparo operation on the Stock Exchange had a tremendous beneficial effect on the prices of undervalued shares and the small investors benefitted. In a period of 3 months the share prices of quoted Companies in the Stock Exchange rose by Rs. 440 crores. Companies finally realised that they must be accountable to all the shareholders and work for the benefit of 100% shareholders and not for the few who are in control of the management. Mr. Swraj Paul's investments will usher in a new era in corporate management which will benefit Companies, all shareholders, the economy and society.

Both CAPARO and APEEJAY are deeply committed to managing for 100% of the shareholders. It is because of this that we treat our Companies as a TRUST and manage for the greater good of all concerned.

Note: This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Sixth Annual General Meeting.

KERALA

Shrewd Moves



WITH some deft manoeuvring, Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran warded off a strong challenge from the Marxist-led Opposition in the state last fortnight.

While the Opposition failed to exploit the differences in the coalition Government, Karunakaran bargained hard to appease the Kerala Congress (Joseph). Said Home Minister Vayalar Ravi: "The ministry was on the brink at one time. P.J. Joseph almost quit the front but we were able to influence him through his confidant, Education Minister T.M. Jacob."

Further pressure on the Joseph group came when a rumour put out by the ruling party began doing the rounds that Pope John Paul II would be visiting the state soon.



Karunakaran: outwitting the Opposition

This had the strong lobby of Catholic bishops putting pressure on the Joseph group not to quit the United Democratic Front (UDF). It was argued that the Joseph group, backed by the Catholics, could not possibly be partners in a CPI (M)-led government. Congress(S) leader K.P. Unnikrishnan alleged that Karunakaran had promised the bishops that he would lay out the red carpet for the Pope. He also agreed to the Joseph group's demand that action would be taken on the stay orders on the distribution of title deeds on forest land.

Karunakaran's next step was to contain the dissident group in his own party led by A.A. Kochunni, a former KPCC(I) treasurer. Kochunni had formed a socialist cultural organisation of anti-Karunakaran men, but neither he nor other prominent dissidents

like K.K. Balakrishnan received any support from the high command. In a swift move, Karunakaran suspended Kochunni for "consistent anti-party activity" and managed to appease even his diehard opponents like Balakrishnan and Cyriac John—at least for the time being.

Conflicting Stories: But the moves and countermoves continued even after the state Assembly met. Shalinitai Patil, MP and a Congress(I) leader from Maharashtra flew into Trivandrum on a secret mission. M.V. Raghavan of the CPI(M) asserted that Shalinitai went to Trivandrum fully equipped to prop up the Karunakaran ministry. Though Raghavan claimed that Shalinitai was treated as a state guest during her stay in Trivandrum, she denied the accusation after her return to Delhi. Instead she claimed she had gone to Kerala to visit the Devi Temple at Kanyakumari.

Adding to the mystery, were two intriguing visits by Karunakaran to Bombay in a space of 30 hours. In fact on November 30, the Indian Airlines flight to Bombay from Trivandrum left an hour late as the chief minister had to finish legislative business. The next day Karunakaran flew into Cochin at eight in the morning, and made a hectic dash to Trivandrum. Karunakaran barely made it back to the Assembly on time. Even as the angry Opposition demanded his presence and UDF members stalled for time, Karunakaran made his dramatic entrance two-and-a-half hours late. Next day he was off to Bombay again, giving rise to much speculation, specially since his office had put out different stories each time.

It appeared that the Opposition had missed the opportunity to exploit his vanishing tricks but last week CPI(M) leader E.K. Nayanar alleged in the *Deshabhimani* that Karunakaran had gone to Bombay to facilitate the release of K.N. Menon, the main partner of Damodar and Sons, who had he claimed been arrested for violations of foreign exchange and customs regulations.

Strong Challenge: Nayanar also said that Menon's release had been secured through Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee. Karunakaran supposedly stayed at Menon's house in Juhu and travelled in his car, and the second trip to Bombay became necessary after the first one failed. Nayanar also asked why the chief minister had not stayed in Bombay as a state guest. Karunakaran responded to these allegations with injured innocence. He stoutly denied that his two trips to Bombay had anything to do with Menon. He even denied that Menon had been arrested. He also told the house that he was willing to face a judicial inquiry if Nayanar submitted a list of the charges. But the Marxists failed to take up the

common buffalo sacrifice with two representatives from each village participating. As it would have it, it rained a few days before due to a cyclone in the Bay of Bengal and the villagers' beliefs were strengthened. Early this year, in Gyarapatti village in North Garhchiroli, a 7-year-old Adivasi girl, Manubai, studying in the ashram tribal school, was found dead in a water pond. There were wounds on her body and lips and her nose had been bleeding. There were no signs of a sexual assault. The police arrested Mum Sahay—a 35-year-old tribal earlier accused of sacrificing his sister's son—and the headman of the school. A few days later they were released for lack of evidence.

Similarly, in Karaspally village last month, a man died in mysterious circumstances and although the police visited Karaspally a few days back, they could prove nothing. The body had been disposed of. In Bhamragarh, though, where 14-year-old Madhav was sacrificed, an arrest has been made. Babu Bhandarkar, a non-tribal farmer from Ettapally, was arrested by the police since the dagger used in the killing was recovered from his house. The three main accused, Joga Madavi and his sons, Karya and Kelloo, who is a priest, insist that they had been contracted by Bhandarkar to carry out the sacrifice.

Propitiation: Local residents say Bhandarkar had reason to thank the goddess. Ten years ago, he had been just a patwari but has since become one of the richest and most powerful farmers in the region. He now has over 40 acres of land, two motorcycles and a tractor. Subramanyam was reluctant to admit the extent of Bhandarkar's involvement in the bloody affair. Said he: "We will know the true position only after we have interrogated Bhandarkar but it is totally unlikely that a non-tribal would be involved directly in the sacrifice." The tribals, however, insist that not only have non-tribals been affected by the ethos of the district, but even non-Maharashtrians in the area perform human sacrifices before constructing a building or a bridge.

The police in fact is planning to make many more arrests, especially since it appears that the Madavis have dipped nails in Madhav's blood and sold them to many farmers to ensure a good harvest next year. Many are aware of the promises of human sacrifice. Moreover, in these superstitious areas, those who find someone from their family suddenly missing or dead under mysterious circumstances, can do little but fear of the tribals. Madhav's father, Jagade Pagade wanders helplessly in the cold, wearing only a torn vest. So far, the official has commiserated with him nor any compensation been offered by the

—COOMI KAPOOR

challenge and the Opposition faced further embarrassment when a spate of denials were published in all Kerala dailies by Menon.

Karunakaran was openly jubilant at the turn of events, saying: "When they could not bring down my ministry through defections, the Marxists have started a whispering campaign to soil my image. It is nothing but character assassination." He added that as a partymen he often had to visit places and it was not always desirable to publicise these trips. About Menon, he added: "Even if he was arrested, how would my physical presence in Bombay achieve that? A telephone call could do that."

However, Karunakaran's woes are not over. The second largest constituent of the ruling front, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is also restive. It is still considering merging with the All India Muslim League (AIML). After talks last week in Calicut, the two groups agreed to unite in principle by next month. The only condition is that the IUML should pull out of the Karunakaran Ministry. Except for Industry Minister E. Ahamed, almost all the members of the IUML feel that unity is far more important than staying in the Government. A combined Muslim League would mean the death-knell for Karunakaran's Ministry. But given his experience in such matters, it is too early to write obituaries.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

KARNATAKA

Civic Success

EMERGING victorious in last fortnight's civic elections, the Congress(I) appeared set on continuing their assault on the ruling Janata Party, and determined to push through 'Operation

Topple' (INDIA TODAY, December 15). The party won a thumping majority in one of the three corporations and 16 of the 48 town and city municipalities that went to the polls.

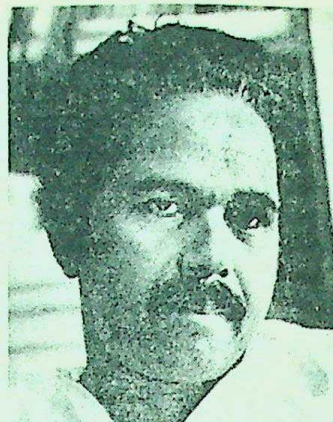
Swept out of power in the last assembly elections in Dakshin Kannada, the Congress(I) won a majority in six of the 12 municipalities, whereas the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won only three, the Janata party two and Pura Samiti one. Out of the 51 seats in the Mangalore corporation, the Congress(I) won 42 and the BJP a mere six seats. K.H. Patil, state Congress(I) chief, said triumphantly: "The elections have proved that the people are dissatisfied with the Ramakrishna Hegde rule. I would not ask Hegde to resign. But I will leave it to him."

The Congress(I) victory in the civic polls came at a crucial moment in its bid to pull down Hegde's Government and as a Congress(I) partymen said: "More than

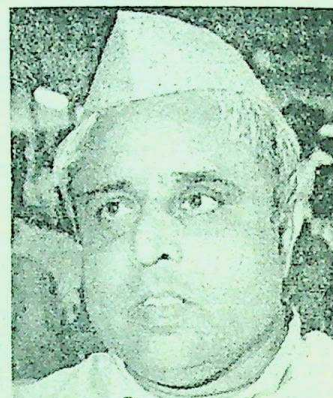
anything it has given us the much needed boost after the Moily tapes." It certainly raised the morale of M. Veerappa Moily, the battered Congress(I) leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, after last month's sordid affair in which Byre Gowda produced an alleged tape-recording of a conversation in which Moily offered him Rs 2 lakh to join the Congress(I) party. The party fared extremely well in Moily's home district, Dakshin Kannada, and he was quick to cash in on its victory. Moily boastfully proclaimed: "The result is a fitting reply to Hegde's vilification campaign against me. I went before the people and got their verdict."

Encouraging Defection: Congress(I) partymen continued to exude confidence in the success of their toppling bid. With 81 MLA's in the 225-strong lower house, they needed 32 to gain an absolute majority. The party claimed last week that 30 MLA's had already defected to them. "We need only two more now" a party leader boasted. The Congress(I) now plans to bring down the 11-month-old Janata Government before Christmas. According to party sources they are now waiting for Azeez Sait, the disgruntled labour minister in Hegde's Cabinet, to announce his resignation, so that they can march to Governor A.N. Banerjee's residence and demand Hegde's removal. Said one "Hegde can't escape. It is only a matter of days."

Even then, the results cannot be taken as a clear reflection of the mood of Karnataka's three crore electorate. For in last fortnight's poll only a quarter of the state's 20 districts voted in full. Elections to civic bodies in the remaining districts which were held in August last saw the Janata Party emerging the most successful having taken control of 45 of the 166 town municipalities that went to the polls. The Congress(I) which came a poor third by capturing only 26 town municipalities pointed out at that time that civic polls really do not reflect the mood of the people. Recalling that comment, Hegde, who has always been quick on the uptake,



Veerappa Moily



K.H. Patil



Ramakrishna Hegde

said snidely: "Why should I resign? This is not a general election. The kind of vilification that Congress(I) is heaping on me is totally unjustified. But I'm glad that they say I did not matter."

Winning Confidence

The BJP, whose fortunes sparked in the last assembly elections but not in the current contest, also sought to play down the significance of the results. As G.M. Rajeshwar, BJP party general secretary, optimistically said: "The results are not a big success for the Congress(I). We have not lost the confidence of the people. If we combine the Janata and BJP votes in the areas, we have polled more

But the party is not content of itself and is doing a fast thinking to re-establish its base in the state. The party executive is to meet in Mysore on December 17 to review the election results and to decide the future course of action. Party circles said that one section is seriously thinking of actually participating in Hegde's Government by taking up the chairmanship of boards of corporations and show that these could be run. But there are plenty of dissenters and the executive body would only take this critical decision at the meeting.

Hegde at present is finding it difficult to hold his allies together. If the BJP decides to participate in the government it would be a credibility to it. Stability

something that Hegde, reeling under repeated blows of the Congress(I), needs. His own partymen have not ended to their squabbles. The election of a party president Manjunatha, which was held last month had to be postponed.

A crucial moment for Hegde's Government would be when he finally calls the winter assembly session which was to be held this month but is now likely to be postponed in mid-January. Hegde cannot postpone the session any further because it would expose his diffidence about his party's majority in the Assembly. If the Congress(I) does succeed in toppling him by the month-end the moment of truth will come when the assembly meets in January. —RAJ CHENNAI

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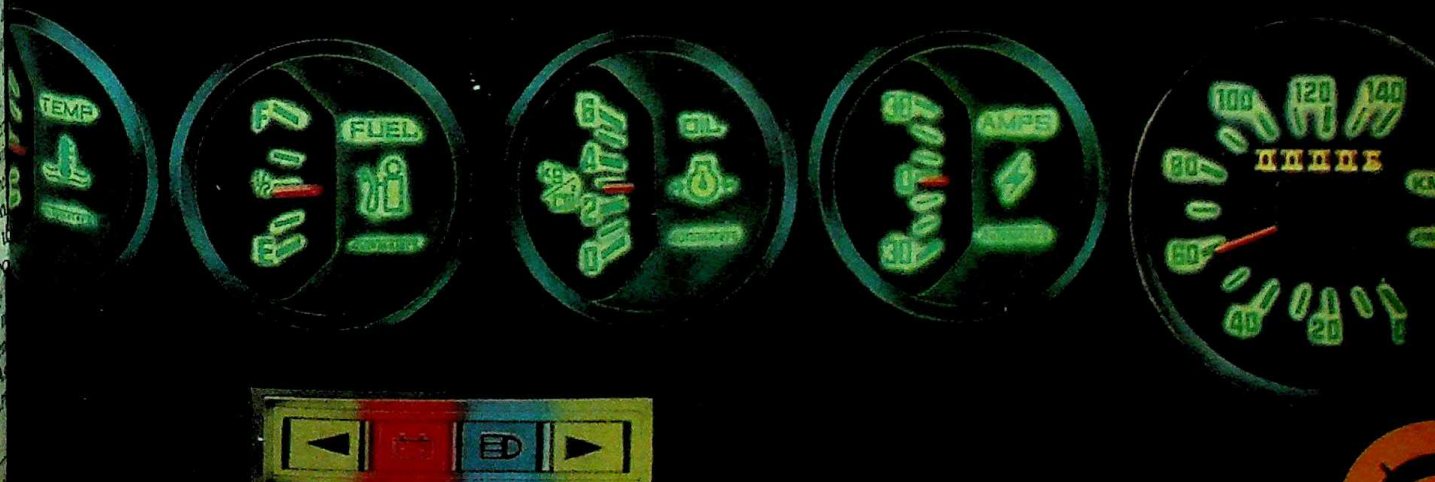
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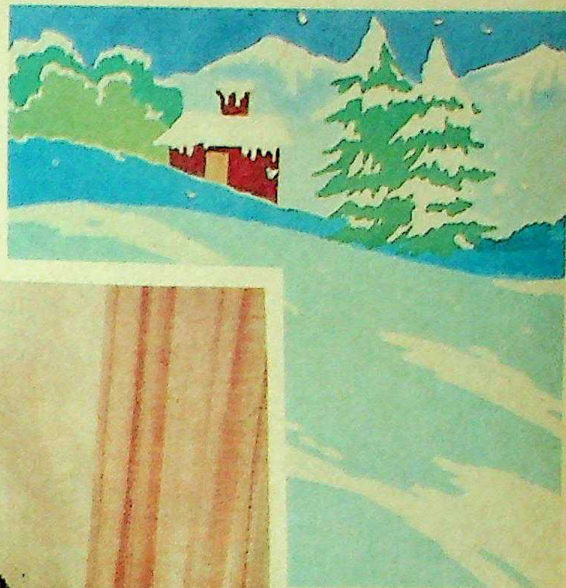
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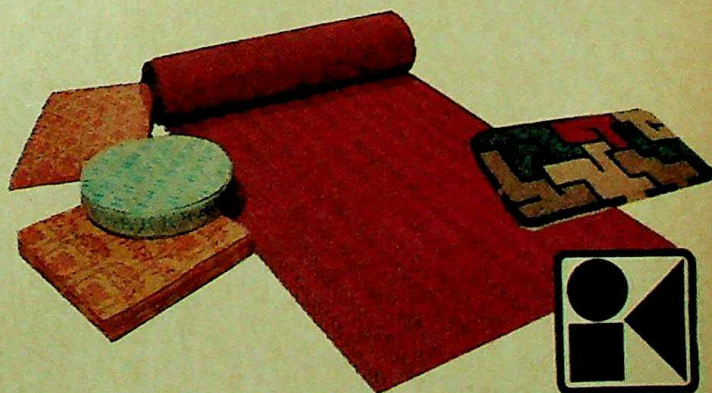
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MIL NADU

Between the Lines

THE REVELATION that it has been opening other people's letters is always an embarrassing one for any government. Thus a furore erupted in the Rajya Sabha last fortnight when

Gopalsamy of the DMK flourished in Tamil Nadu Government order authorising the police to open his car. Rajya Sabha Chairman M. H. Qureshi sent Gopalsamy's privilege motion against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran and state chief secretary to the state government for comments. Said Gopalsamy: "It is a most obnoxious move. I am not a proclaimed offender or a criminal. I am an elected representative of the people and MGR has abused his notorious police not only on me but on all my leaders to suppress information about our party activities. In this devious way he is trying to suppress not only our party but all those who are in Government doesn't like for independent views."

Interception of Gopalsamy's began on July 21, 1983, when the secretary wrote a confidential letter to the superintendent of police, Special Branch, CID, Madras, and the District Magistrate, Tirunelveli district, directing them to look into all Gopalsamy's mail for six months. The order, issued under the Indian Post Office Act 1898, stated that the mail "shall be intercepted, detained and delivered to the superintendent of police, Special Branch, CID, Madras, or any person authorised by the said superintendent in this behalf". The CID sent a separate communication to that effect to the Tirunelveli post office on September 1983.

Organised Snooping: There was a system to prevent news of the explosion leaking out. The police at the post office to "hand over to the police all articles before date-stamping them". As mail is supposed to be opened by the receiving post office some day, late delivery might have been cat out of the bag. So the postmaster was told to date-stamp the mail after it had been opened by the

palsamy is not the only DMK
whose mail is being intercepted.
According to intelligence sources, the

state Government has issued about 70 orders containing the names of over 200 people including that of DMK chief M. Karunanidhi, six of the 17 district party presidents and a dozen youth leaders. Says Arcot Veerasamy, DMK MLC and secretary, DMK headquarters:



"As MGR is losing his popularity very quickly, he wants to gather information about us so that he can plan counter-moves. His act is comparable to the Watergate scandal. We will fight it out."

The state Government is tight-lipped on the disclosures, but DMK leaders allege that MGR began the snooping soon after the large-scale killings of Tamils in Sri Lanka. As Gopalsamy had active links with the Tamil Tigers operating from Tamil Nadu and in Sri Lanka, a watch on his activities would have helped both state and Central intelligence to gauge the degree of popular support for the Tigers both in Tamil Nadu and in Sri Lanka.


Political Motives: The Government's action also appears to be related to the 5,000-strong Youth Volunteer Corps that the DMK is forming as an election force. Gopalsamy was asked to start recruiting for the corps in Tirunelveli district and train volunteers in mob control, poster distribution and scrutiny of electoral rolls. They were also given physical training—by ex-servicemen and retired police officials, which provoked the state Government to ban drills by any organisation in public places. DMK leaders charge that MGR resorted to the ordinance only when he discovered that there was a big response to the corps and in support of this contention cite MGR's statement at a press conference two months ago when he said: "It is out of experience that the Government has chosen to ban training by political parties with ex-servicemen and weapons." However, MGR had said this after an attack on some Congress(I) and AIADMK leaders, allegedly by a group of DMK youths.

The Home Department, headed by MGR, is understood to have maintained in its explanation to the Government that the interception orders were issued on a selective basis in the interests of "public safety and tranquillity". But as much the same explanation was offered when People's Union for Civil Liberties workers were brutally lathi-charged or when high court judges were put under surveillance, no one is going to take that too seriously. However, as the Centre itself has been caught out more than once on interception of mail, it is likely that it won't look very unkindly on the Tamil Nadu Government's excesses. The Gopalsamy episode will probably, like others in the past, simply fade away.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

Pol. R. 52

SECRET


PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.
(Abstract.)

Indian Post Office Act, 1898 (Central Act VI of 1898) - Interception of Correspondence -

Vai. Gopalsamy, M.A.B.L., M.P., Kuvuvikulam, Tirumelveli District.

-Ordered-

G.O. No. SP/1654-30/P3, dated 21 July 1983

Order

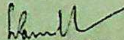
WHEREAS the Governor of Tamil Nadu is satisfied that it is necessary to make the following order in the interest of the Public safety and tranquillity:

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 29(1) of the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 (Central Act VI of 1898), the Governor of Tamil Nadu hereby directs that for the period of one year from date of order upto all letters of 31-1-84 (all postal articles) of any description whatsoever in the course of transmission by post addressed to or emanating from

Vai. Gopalsamy, MAEL, M.P., Kuvuvikulam, Tirumelveli District.

shall be intercepted and detained, and forwarded to the Superintendent of Police, Special Branch, C.I.D. Madurai or any person deputed by the said Superintendent in this behalf.

(By order of the Governor.)


(S. RAMASUNDARAM)
For Chief Secretary to Government.

Memorandum.
or
INTERCEPTION OF CORRESPONDENCE.

Whereas, for information and record of necessary action, is a copy of G.O. No. SP/1654-30/83, dated the 21st July, 1983, authorising the interception of correspondence addressed to or emanating from;

Vai. Gopalsamy, MAEL, M.P., Kuvuvikulam, Tirumelveli District

for the period ending 31-1-1984

Tirumelveli

2. The Superintendent of Police, Tirumelveli

wherein I have authorised to act on my behalf, will depute an officer to assist you, please hand over to him all articles before Date-Stamping them. After necessary action has been taken, the articles will be handed back to you. When they may be date-stamped and passed on by the same delivery. It is very necessary to avoid any delay, especially in the delivery. On no account should any articles be sent to this office. (In case, for any reason, no Police Officer turns up in time, the articles need not be detained but passed on, in order to avoid any delay.

3. The strictest secrecy is essential in this matter, as any leakage of information is likely to bring about consequences embarrassing to Government.

4. Please acknowledge receipt of the order.

B
For Superintendent of Police,
Special Branch, C.I.D.

**MGR (top left), Gopalsamy and the Government orders:
embarrassing disclosures**

UDAIPUR

Dynastic Dispute

THE PLACID calm of Udaipur's Pichchola Lake and its surrounding palaces was last fortnight in danger of being rudely shaken by a royal intrigue involving the country's oldest line of kings. Threatening to permanently split a family which traces its ancestry through 75 generations and 1,400 years, a sordid court battle for control of the Mewar fortunes had exposed a heap of well-concealed skeletons in the closet. Though kept from the public gaze by the local newspapers which remain deeply in awe of Maharana Bhagwat Singh and the palace household, depositions before the Udaipur Sessions Court and Rajasthan High Court at Jodhpur by his eldest son Mahendra Singh in suits for mismanagement and partition of the family estate nonetheless painted a picture of royal philandering and financial extravagance which would be a scandal-sheeter's dream.

The accusations and counter-charges were flying fast and loose. Although the dispute is technically a mere partition suit for division of the large Mewar inheritance, it has set the stage for airing the family's crested linen, much of it apparently soiled. Accusing his father of besmirching the fine old history of Mewar with irresponsible behaviour ranging from philandering to financial skulduggery and mismanagement, the "heir apparent's" suits argue that the Maharana

has squandered the royal fortune without benefiting the family in any manner.

"We can't be expected to pay the price for the peccadilloes of my father", said Mahendra Singh, 42, who settled in Bombay 13 years ago, after the rift with his father first began, "my bugbear is that things are being wasted away, and unless we put everything into order today I fear that the joint family assets as well as each person's individual assets are going to be sucked into a hole of liabilities and taxes." Seated on the sun-warmed terrace of the Shambhu Nivas Palace where he lives, the Maharana, a short, swarthy man dressed simply in a homespun woollen Jodhpuri, retorted: "These are just his frustrations. Who is he to question how I have spent the money, what is his locus standi? What the father does is his business, the son has no right to question it."

High Stakes: At stake in the bitter dispute is a royal inheritance that today runs into many crore rupees. When the Instrument of Transfer to the Union of India was signed by Bhagwat Singh's father, more than 20 palaces in the princely state of Mewar—Rajputana's fifth largest in area, but most prestigious because of its history of repelling foreign invaders—were designated his private property and retained by the royal household complete with their opulent fittings and *objets d'art*; over 1,000 acres of agricultural land, 400 acres of urban, and the sprawling estates that went with each palace were left to the family; shooting, grass and forest rights over much of the 134,959 sq miles state were granted to the line which had enjoyed them for 14 centuries; and large hoards of jewellery and precious metals remained the private property of the Maharanas.

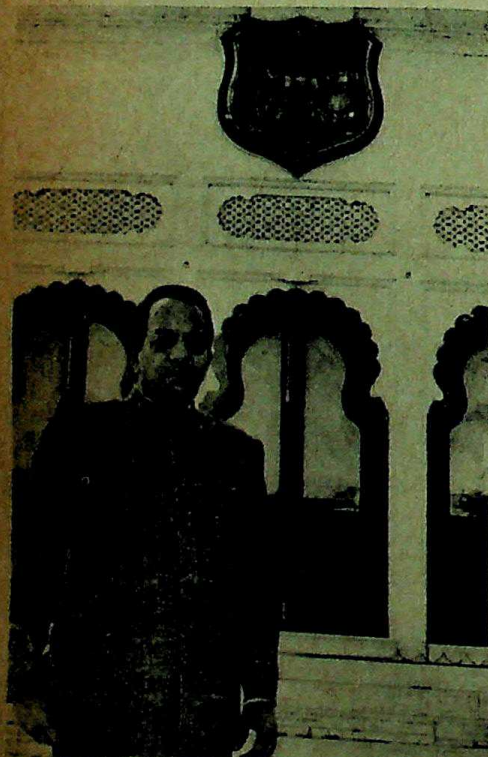
Given the murky complex state of the Mewar finances, it is impossible to accurately estimate the size of the family empire. But even a rough reckoning makes it clear that the sums involved are substantial. At current market prices, the Rs 10.5 lakh worth of jewellery left by Maharana Bhupal Singh on his death in 1955 would be worth over Rs 2 crore. In addition, the royal hoards included 900 kilograms of silver valued today at roughly Rs 31.5 lakh, a 19-piece silver furniture set which included heavy sofa sets and writing desks, hundreds of gold utensils and "dharam sabha" (puja items made of gold) which would be worth well over Rs 1 crore, Rs 12.45 lakh in cash balances, and large amounts of priceless heirlooms which would be near-impossible to value.

The estate duties alone after Bhupal Singh's death in 1955 amounted to over

Rs 10 lakh, and since then jewellery and real estate prices have galloped in a metrical progression. Included too in the current dispute is the hoteliering empire made famous by its prime locations around the picturesque Pichchola Lake Palace Hotels and Motels Private. Set up around 1960 by Bhagwat Singh in expanding a royal island retreat in the lake, the company shot to international fame in the two decades since, and by mid-1982 had assets valued at Rs 1.8 crore.

Family Feud: According to Mahendra Singh, the dispute with his father began in 1970, when the son, who was then managing the Lake Palace Hotel, objected to his father arbitrarily giving funds from the company's coffers to a British girl-friend, Anna Parker. Forced out of active participation in the family's financial affairs soon after, he opted to shift to Bombay and live off his investments and a small export business. "But the squandering and mismanagement of family properties continued", said Singh. "my father gave Lake Palace, till then a profitable enterprise, to the Taj Mahal group for management, a step which has netted Rs 43 lakh and us only Rs 21,000 in the last five years. The frittering away of jewellery, houses and estates went on as it had in the past, apart from leaving very little of the family inheritance which my grandfather had left behind, he has been misled by sycophants and low people to indulge in transfers and transactions which will create tremendous problems for all of us."

But Bhagwat Singh questions both



Bhagwat Singh: accused of waste



Mahendra Singh: falling out with

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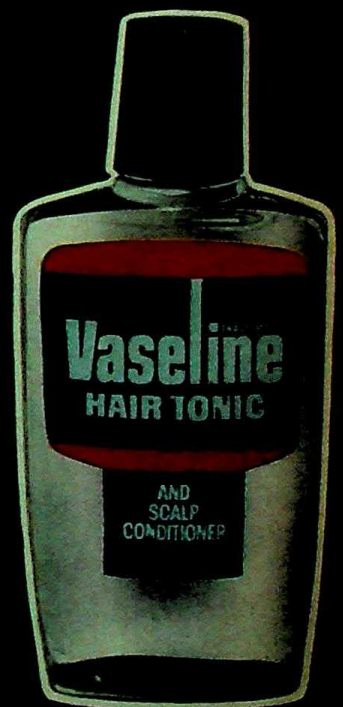
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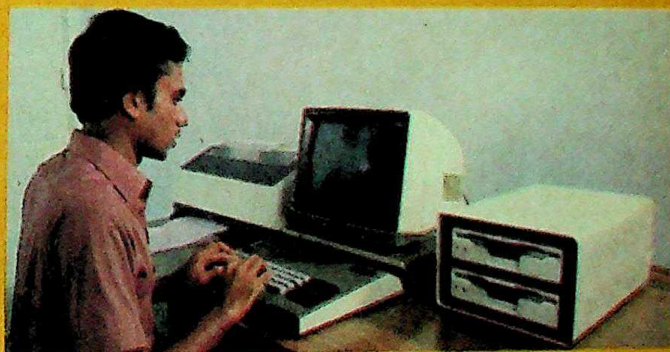
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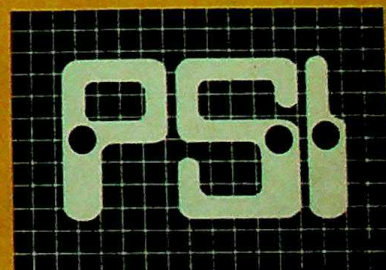
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A PSI Action Station at work.

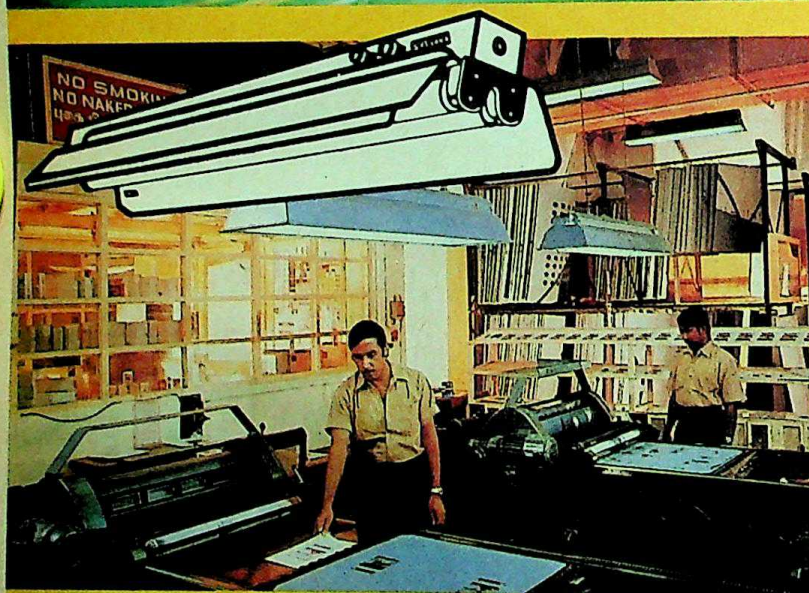
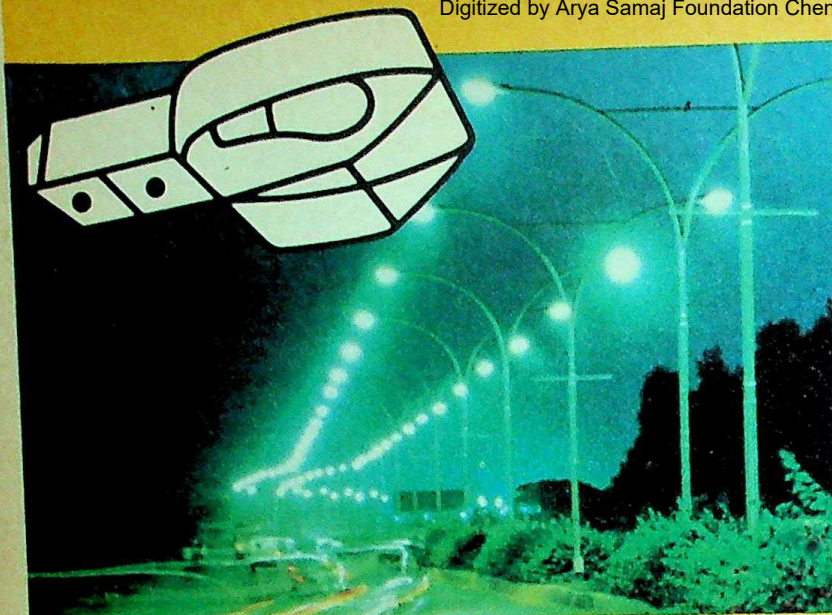
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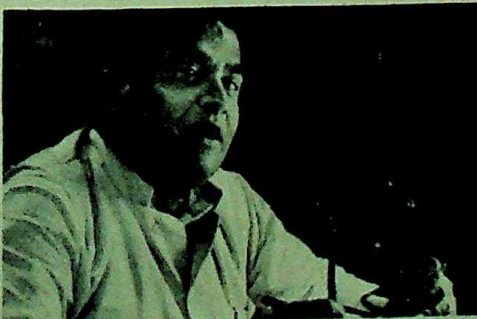
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BIHAR

A Weird War

BATTLES between political rivals are rarely ever clean, and it is almost in the natural course of things for skeletons to come tumbling out of cupboards. In Bihar this happened quite literally

when bones were found in a house used by former chief minister Jagannath Mishra for his "janata durbars". The discovery was made by Laliteswar Prasad Shahi, state industries minister and a Mishra opponent. But as the anti-Mishra faction in the Congress(I) crowed at this unexpected bonus, which they thought would discredit their enemy, both Mishra and his arch-rival, Chief Minister Chandra Shekhar Singh ignored the entire incident. That no real damage had been done was proved last fortnight when Mishra's name was included in the Bihar



Mishra and (top) the bones recovered from his old house: a "prank" that failed

Pradesh Congress Committee(I) (BPCC-I) newly reconstituted by Mrs Gandhi. Smirked a Mishra supporter: "For about four months now these people tried desperately to discover some skeletons in his cupboard, but now they find the bones choking their own throats."

The bizarre incident of the bones, which even the police have dismissed as a prank, only illustrates how bitter the infighting in the ruling party has become. By the end of last month, seven district party heads, who support Mishra, were sacked by Ram Sharan Singh, state party president, for "anti-party activities". All seven had been charged with attending the parallel meeting organised by Mishra on November 19 (INDIA TODAY, December 15) and indulging in groupism within the organisation. Mishra and his followers quickly launched a counter-offensive, accusing the party chief of encouraging factionalism and destroying the party. They also complained to the party high command that the chief minister and the party chief were packing the party with anti-Indira forces.

Worrying Developments: The debilitating internal squabbling has clearly got the party's central leadership worried. According to party sources, last fortnight Rajiv Gandhi and three other general secretaries of the party, G.K. Moopanar, Chandulal Chandrakar and C.M. Stephen, went into a huddle to discuss the developments in Bihar. Former Union energy minister K.C. Pant flew to Patna to get firsthand information on the situation in the state. And according to an ex-dissident and now disillusioned ministerialist, Pant was pained to know that the general impression about the chief minister was that he was a man of thought without action, while Mishra was a man of action without thought. Said the ministerialist: "The difference is not big, but the credibility of the Government and of Rajiv Gandhi who selected the chief minister is at stake."

The war between the pro- and anti-Mishra factions led to some unexpected fallout. In their eagerness to eliminate Mishra men from the BPCC(I), apparently Chandra Shekhar Singh and Ram Sharan Singh had disagreements and submitted separate lists for the high command's approval. The chief minister denied this allegation, saying that both had submitted identical lists.

Adding to the urgency of the battle are the imminent by-elections in three constituencies including a crucial one at Banka on December 23 where Chandra Shekhar Singh is pitted against eight other candidates. The reconstitution of the BPCC(I) might have already divided the party rank and file, but further accusations that Mishra is actually supporting an independent in Banka has served to put the Congress(I) in a rather un-

vidence of wealth claimed by his son, and son's right to any wealth which may exist. saying that Mewar was never a rich state and it had for centuries been involved in fighting off enemies rather than accumulating wealth, he insisted that his father had left no inheritance at all. Said the Maharana: "The death duties and other charges on my father's passing left practically nothing, on the contrary what was left over was debt. And after that if we are doing social services to the tune of Rs 40 lakh a year, where can you find a loophole to say we have frittered away the family fortune? Even if we accept that his contention is correct, who is he to ask, what right does he have to question what I do with my inheritance under the laws of primo geniture, which give us the sole right of inheritance." In court, Mahendra Singh will attempt to prove that the Mewar family properties are in fact governed by the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 rather than the primo geniture which gave rulers the sole and unquestionable right to use their fortunes as they pleased. High courts in the Nabha and Patiala royal family disputes have in the past ruled that primo geniture ceased to apply when documents of accession were signed with the Union of India, but since there have been no Supreme Court judgments on this is not legally settled. Furthermore, he charges in his deposition that even the jewellery, gold utensils and silver willed to him by his grandfather—the 16 bharis (one bhari is equivalent to 11.65 kg) of gold, 6,620 bharis of silver and jewellery left to him would be valued at current market prices at over Rs 90 lakh—had been misutilised by his father and not passed on to him. In a separate suit in the Rajasthan High Court, Mahendra Singh as a shareholder and director of Lake Palace Hotel accuses his father of both mismanagement and oppression of the minority shareholder. The court disputes will in all likelihood mark the beginning of the end for the Mewar family. Already the family is polarised into two groups, with Bhagwat Singh and his younger son Arvind at one end and Mahendra Singh at the other, and judging by the tone of vituperation in their attacks on each other it appeared that things were likely to get worse. Worse still from the point of view of the family will be the effect of the court-ordered disclosures on family financial affairs. Disclosed in minute detail to the gaze of government and revenue officials, the royal finances are bound to give taxmen an excuse for a bigger share. And the personal expenses which are already on court records will not do the 1,400-year-old dynasty's name any much good.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH in Udaipur

happy position on the eve of the polls.

Continuing Strife: Meanwhile, both the chief minister and Mishra have ironically gone back to woo their own caste blocks, after all those pious proclamations to the contrary. In an obvious bid to get back into the good books of his fellow-Maithils, Mishra is bustling about getting a Maithila newspaper together. He issued an appeal to all Maithils to donate liberally to the newspaper, which is projected at championing their cause, highlighting their problems, and fighting for the inclusion of the Maithili language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The chief minister hasn't lagged behind either. He shot across to Arrah, the Rajput stronghold, to announce a government decision to set up a university to be named after Veer Kuwar Singh, a freedom fighter.

But all this activity only goes to fuel the internal war further. With no sign of a ceasefire yet, and no obvious victor emerging, the victim of all these attacks and counter-attacks can only be the party itself.

—FARZAND AHMED

WEST BENGAL

On a Leash

STEPPING into the fray in West Bengal last fortnight, the Congress(I) high command in Delhi made it abundantly clear that it would tolerate no nonsense from its party workers in the state.

Emphasising that from now on Delhi's decision will prevail while organising the party's plenary session which is to be held in Calcutta from December 27 to 30, AICC(I) General Secretary C.M. Stephen sternly declared: "All funds will come from Delhi and there should be no collection at the state level."

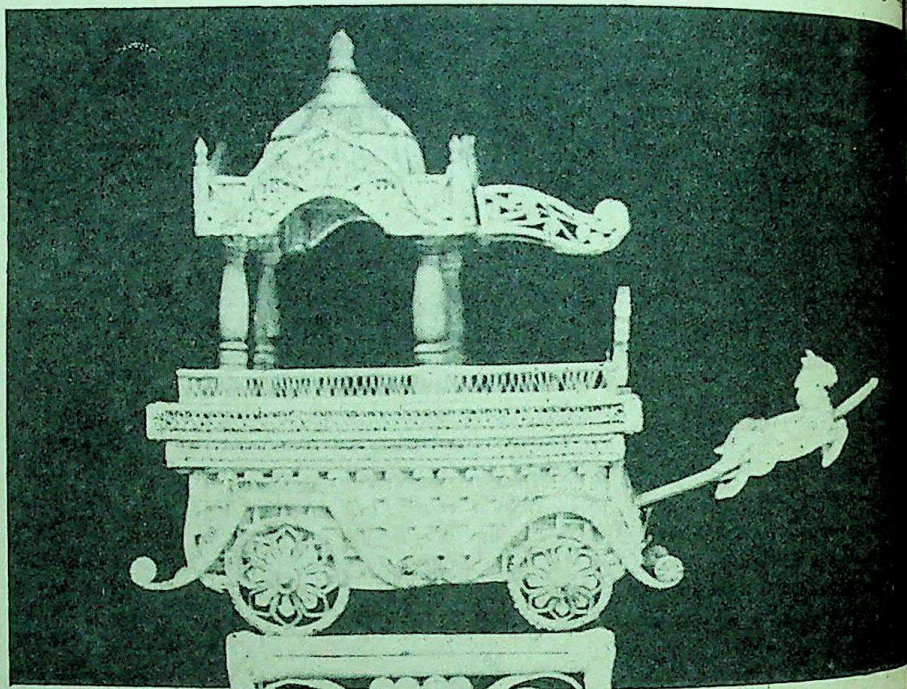
The Congress(I) obviously has reason to worry about infighting. It has also been worrying about funds ever since it got wind of some budgetary provisions that a few subcommittees were preparing for themselves. The two most discussed proposals were:

- ▶ laying aside Rs 60,000 to buy antacid tablets for delegates who might need them,
- ▶ spending Rs 18 lakh to take Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi in procession from the airport to Raj Bhavan. Congress(I) legislator from north Calcutta, Somen Mitra, who had been in charge of the relevant subcommittee, had persuaded local leaders to agree to his grandiose plans to carry the prime minister and her son in two chariots, which were to be drawn by seven horses each and to have 77 welcome arches erected along the route.

As news of this ambitious plan spread the state Government promptly put its foot down on this kind of extravaganza on security grounds. Protests by Congress(I) leaders in Calcutta fell on deaf ears as the state Government's contention found support in the Prime Minister's Secretariat itself. The "chariot idea" was dropped and a clearly depressed Mitra found that with the horse-drawn carriages gone, all he was left with were the welcome arches. But now even the posters will come from Delhi and Mitra is further burdened with the AICC(I) directive that all decorations must be kept at a very low key.

Elsewhere, in the organisational scena-

Even as such inroads into each of the territories were made, the 23 subcommittees—the original number of 17 had to be increased to accommodate the numerous factions—which the party had split in West Bengal—went into a tizzy as word came from Delhi that spending would have to be kept to a minimum and there should be no ostentatious displays. Ashoke Sen, MP, chairman of the reception committee, had earlier promised a budget of Rs 60 lakh which could even have been cut up, and the announcement had gladdened many hearts. But when he came back to Delhi with news of the budget being slashed by half, it triggered off a scramble for getting



The model of the ceremonial chariot (top): Pranab Mukherjee (left) and Chowdhury: jockeying for power

rio were others who also found themselves relieved of a part of their charges, like Santosh Roy, convenor of the food subcommittee, who was abruptly told that he would not have to bother about the delegates' breakfast as this would now be the concern of Subrata Mukherjee who is looking after the delegates' accommodation. Mukherjee had argued that since he was organising the accommodation he might as well organise the breakfast and his arguments found favour.

much of the pie as possible in real earnings.

Disappointment: The state-level leadership was also clearly annoyed at the new developments. Said Rajesh Khaitan, PCC(I) treasurer: "I have no idea of how much money is being spent or who is spending it. Originally it was decided that by virtue of my position as the PCC(I) treasurer, I would be associated with bank operations. But I have been told that this would not be the case."

Khaitan is not the only one to feel let down. Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee's attempt to get his business friend Manoj Ghosh to be the convenor of the finance subcommittee also failed—according to the Congress(I) grapevine. Ghosh would have been entrusted with the entire responsibility of collecting funds at the state level.

In fact, Pranab Mukherjee has lost much ground to his arch-rival and Rajiv Minister Ghani Khan Chowdhury. Indeed, it was Pranab Mukherjee who was taking a lot of interest in making arrangements for the session but with the appearance of Sen



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Shaka
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Chandra Gupta
(320 – 335 AD)



Samudragupta
(335 – 375 AD)



Kumar Gupta
(415 – 455 AD)



Kumar Gupta
(415 – 455 AD)



Kumar Gupta
(415 – 455 AD)



Gujarat Sultanate
(1536 – 1553 AD)



Shah Alam I
(1707 – 1712 AD)



Mughal Mohammed Shah
(1719 – 1748 AD)



Samudragupta
(335 – 375 AD)



Chandra Gupta II
(375 – 414 AD)



Chandra Gupta II
(375 – 414 AD)



Later Gupta
(455 – 510 ad)



Later Gupta
(455 – 510 AD)



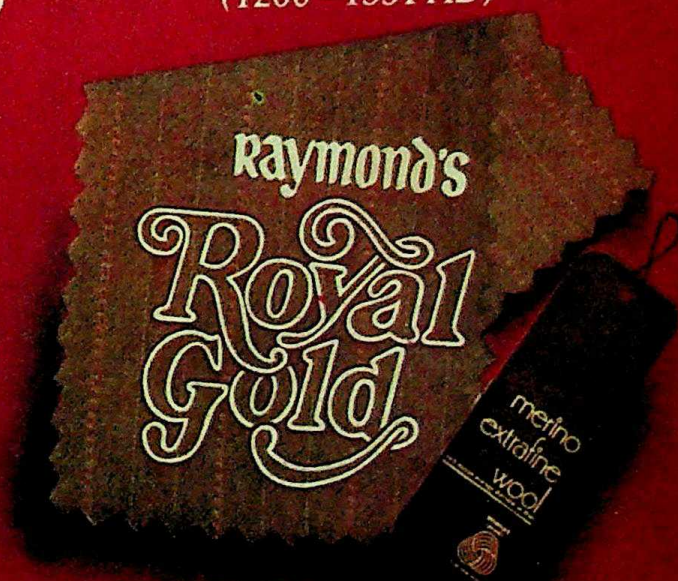
Delhi Sultanate
(1206 – 1351 AD)



Nawab of Awadh
(1819 – 1827 AD)

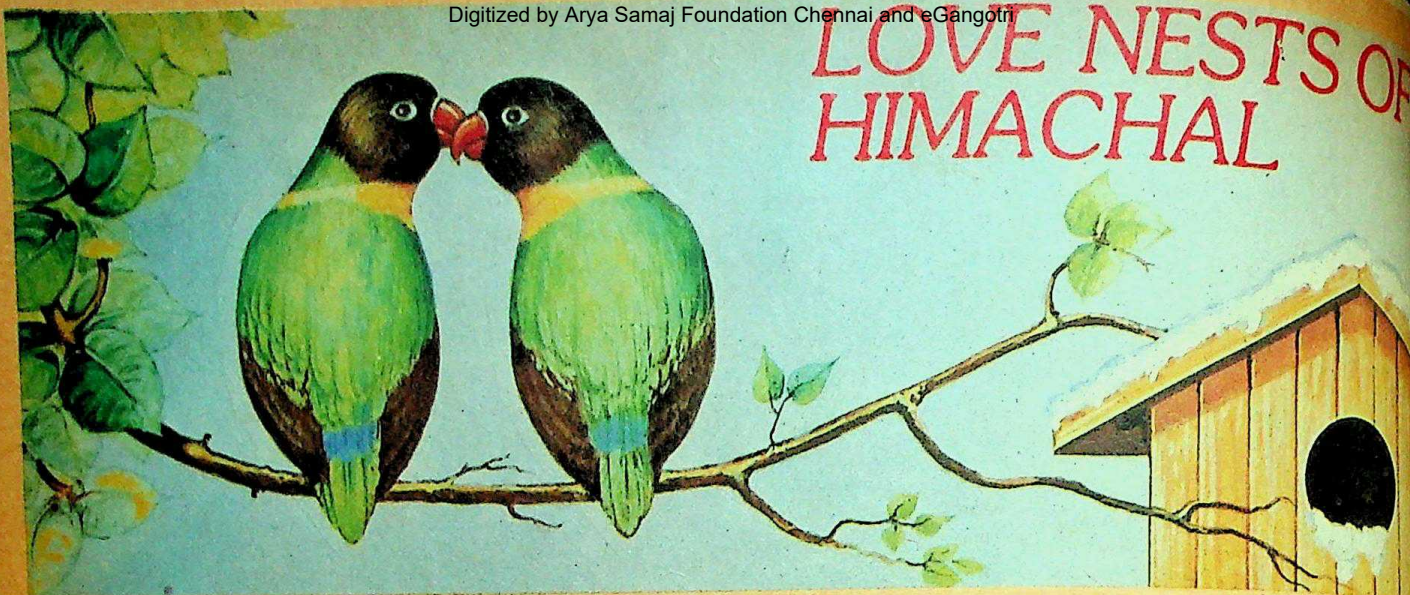


Nawab of Awadh
(1819 – 1827 AD)



A Collector's Item
(1975 AD)

LOVE NESTS OF HIMACHAL



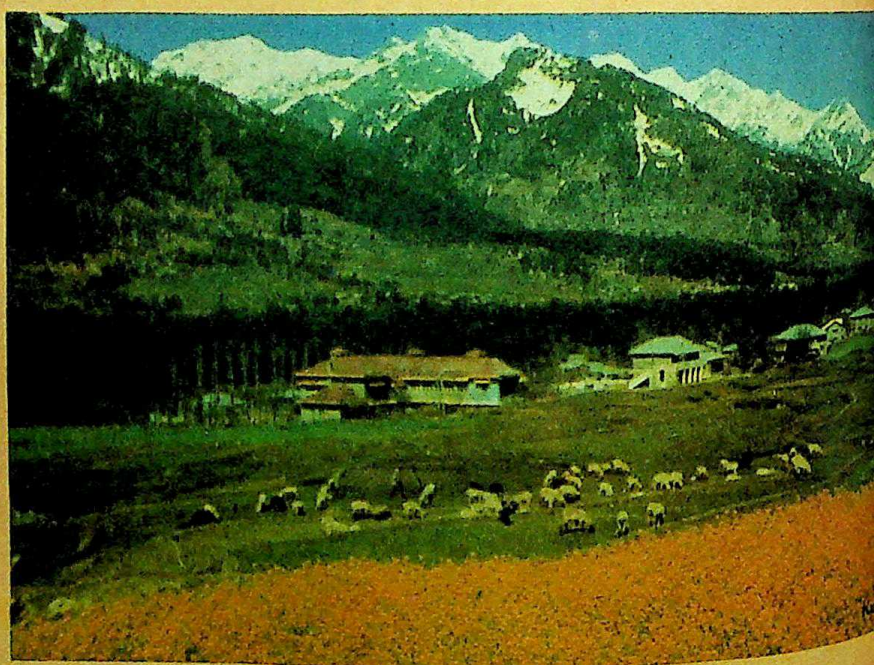
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HIMACHAL TOURISM

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Winning Ways



THE CONGRESS(I)'S efforts to reinforce the strength of its legislature parties are apparently not confined to Karnataka. Up north, in the hilly state of Himachal Pradesh, Chief

Minister Virbhadra Singh last month succeeded in winning over the lone independent MLA in the state Assembly, Major Vijay Singh Malkhotia, thus raising the strength of the Congress(I) Legislature Party (CLP) to 36 in the 68-member house. Malkhotia, a former army officer, is the fifth MLA to cross over to the ruling party since assembly elections were held in May 1982. After his coup, Singh crowed: "Malkhotia began his political career as a Congressman. After remaining away for a few months, he is back with us."

Malkhotia did, in fact, quit his Air-India job in 1980 to join the Congress(I). At one stage, he was even considered to be a part of Rajiv's inner circle. But his political fortunes took a nosedive in 1982, when he was denied a Congress(I) ticket for the Himachal Assembly elections. He quit the party in protest, but has now returned evidently chastened. Said Gian Chand Totu, president, Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee-I (HPCC-I): "He has joined us without any pre-conditions, and will be an asset to us in the state."

Strategic Move: The decision to admit Malkhotia and other former Congressmen who deserted the Congress(I) when Ram Lal was the chief minister was taken with the twin objectives of fleshing out the Congress(I)'s wafer-thin majority in the legislature and to erode the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) expanding base in the Kangra region. The central leadership—which was earlier opposed to the inclusion of rebels—yielded to Singh's persuasion when the party was badly mauled in the recently held assembly by-election in Banikhet constituency, which the BJP wrested from the Congress(I).

With the "home-coming" of Malkhotia, not only will the state Government be more comfortable in the Assembly, the Congress(I) also feels it is in a better position to berate its foe, the BJP, in the Kangra region, where it again fared badly in the assembly elections. Said a beaming Malkhotia, after his re-admission: "The Congress(I) will have to put in a lot of efforts to retrieve the lost ground in the Kangra region, and

I will work towards strengthening it there.

With the chief minister's strategic wooing of former Congressmen, the long awaited move for a Cabinet reshuffle has also been revived. Singh could not expand his Cabinet during the last six months for fear of defections from the CLP if some prominent MLA's were ignored. And because he could neither drop controversial ministers nor induct new MLA's into the state administration, his government was promptly accused of inaction by the Opposition. But soon after raising his party's majority, Singh swung into action against corrupt officials and dashed off to New Delhi to seek the high command's approval for expanding his Cabinet. Claims Singh: "My absolute majority was never in doubt earlier, but now I can face my critics with more confidence and expedite various administrative and political matters."



Singh: adroit move

The decision to admit former Congressmen who had deserted the Congress(I) was taken to flesh out the party's wafer-thin majority and erode the BJP's expanding base.

Singh, however, has another specific upshot for Malkhotia—to counter the influence of Sat Mahajan, state tourism minister, and Vikram Mahajan, former Union minister for state for energy, who are both considered to be close to former chief minister Ram Lal. Since the Mahajans have a sizeable following in the CLP, the entry of Malkhotia—a sworn enemy of Ram Lal and the Mahajans—will consolidate the chief minister's control over the CLP.

Party Protest: Predictably enough, Singh's efforts to bring back rebels like Malkhotia have caused rumblings within the party. For one, it has annoyed loyalists who fought Malkhotia both inside the Assembly and out of it, and who are particularly incensed at Singh's dismissal of the unanimous protest of the Kangra District Congress Committee(I). A week before Malkhotia's formal admission into the party, at a meeting two ministers vehemently opposed the move. Said a Congress(I) leader from Kangra: "How can we tolerate a person who was attacking our leaders like Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi till a few months ago? Just because he is a Rajput like the chief minister, he should not be given preferential treatment in the party. He has filed criminal cases

the scene he felt he was being relegated to the backstage by the high command and found things even more uncomfortable when Chowdhury threw in his lot with Sen after becoming certain that the latter enjoyed the blessings of Rajiv Gandhi. Even before the AIACC(I) had announced that it would contribute all funds, Chowdhury had tipped his followers about this, thereby making it apparent that he was one up on Pranab Mukherjee.

Bizarre Developments: While the two Bengal ministers played their game of getting each other in Delhi, bizarre developments continued to take place in their home state. Ever since he was made chairman of the reorganisation committee, Sen had been trying hard to get a berth for his old friend and former West Bengal minister, Prafulla Kanti Ghosh. But he found the going hard as there appeared a general resentment to Prafulla Kanti, and the indefatigable Sen pressed hard. As a first measure he raised the number of subcommittees from 17 to 22—to accommodate many sections as possible, and then came a surprise when he announced another—a liaison subcommittee with Prafulla Kanti at its head. The announcement was all the more surprising as a coordination committee already existed and when questions were asked as to what the new committee would do, Sen explained: "It will act as a bridge between the coordination committee and the various subcommittees." His explanation drew the retort from a Congress(I) leader that "it will be like the second bridge across the Hooghly which is never likely to get off the ground".

As these wranglings went on, it was also clearly in keeping with the Congress(I) culture that nobody spared any thought to the actual deliberations that would take place during the four-day session. With word spreading in party circles that the Calcutta session would follow the Bombay pattern it was expected that the Marxists would be let off lightly again. This had angered the West Bengal delegates in Bombay but this time they seemed bothered with issues such as the occupation of jockeying for position. Subrata Mukherjee was perhaps the only exception when he said: "We have agreed that the session will be on the lines of the Bombay meet but this time we may succeed in seeing that the Marxists are not really spared." However, he agreed that like the organisation of the session, decision on the deliberations will also lie wholly with the leadership and came out with the resigned remark: "Now it is Delhi which is doing everything and we feel we don't have much to do." Having exposed themselves as a fragmented house, there is nothing they can do to being used as errand boys for the Congress in Delhi.

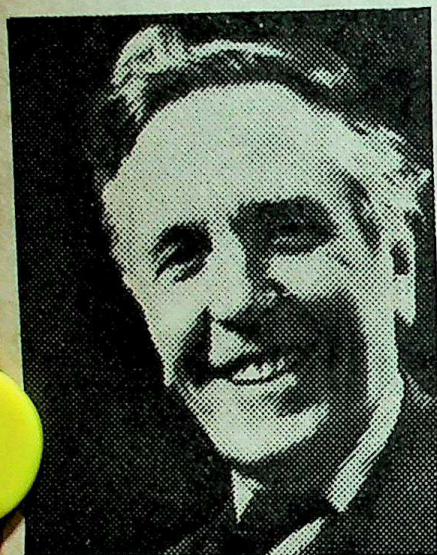
—SUMANTA SEN



Highlights from Chairman's Speech

Sales have exceeded Rs.100 crores and profit after tax at Rs.2.57 crores has shown a 22 percent increase over the previous year.

Following the acquisition of Huntley & Palmer by Nabisco, a very large international organisation and a leading producer and marketer of branded packaged foods, its significant strengths in manufacturing and marketing, as also its substantial financial resources and management capabilities, will assist Britannia to become stronger and more prosperous.



Mr. A.R. Pendry

Speech delivered by Mr. A.R. Pendry, Chairman, Britannia Industries Limited, at the Annual General Meeting at Calcutta on 2nd December, 1983.

In welcoming you to the 65th Annual General Meeting of your Company I should like to say how very pleased I am personally to be here with you today.

The Accounts of the year 1982/83 and the Directors' report to the shareholders have been with you for some time now. As you will have observed, your Company, has had a very satisfactory year. Sales have exceeded Rs.100 crores and profit after tax at Rs.2.57 crores has shown a 22 percent increase over the previous year. Following from this improved performance your Directors have recommended a final dividend of 11 percent which with the interim dividend of 5 percent declared earlier makes a total of 16 percent on the expanded post bonus equity capital and compared favourably with 19 percent dividend for the last year. I am sure you will wish to join me in thanking the Managing Director and Chief Executive, Mr. R.K. Lal, and through him the executives and employees at all levels for their hard work which has produced these excellent results.

During the year under review, Nabisco Brands acquired the

business of Huntley & Palmer in UK and elsewhere in the world and with this the equity holding of Huntley & Palmer in Britannia passed to Nabisco Brands. Nabisco Brands has always regarded India as a major segment in the world market for processed foods and is very pleased indeed to have this opportunity to be associated with your Company. Nabisco Brands is a very large international organisation and a leading producer and marketer of branded packaged foods. It has very significant strengths in manufacturing and marketing, also substantial financial resources and management capabilities. Its products include many of the world's best selling biscuits and confectionaries, nuts and snack foods, margarines, desserts and cereals. These are sold in over 100 countries and made in more than 30 countries. I believe that Nabisco Brands will be able to assist your Company in the further production of stable packaged goods from some of the agricultural produce of India which is not always effectively utilised, and I hope that in this we shall have the active encouragement of government.

You will be pleased to know that the Company's growth plans are being pursued vigorously. The Company is awaiting government approvals for the Soya complex in Madhya Pradesh and as soon as these are available further steps will be taken in hand. Meanwhile your Board is also examining several other opportunities in allied fields and will come back with proposals for your approval when viable projects have been identified.

Following the Nabisco association with your Company there have been changes in your Board. Mr. M.M. Sabharwal, your erstwhile Chairman retired and I had the privilege of succeeding him. I wish to take this opportunity to record the very considerable contribution Mr. Sabharwal with his extensive experience and business knowledge made to the prosperity of your Company during his period of office. I am sure all of you will join me in paying him a richly deserved tribute and wishing him well in future endeavours.

The year also saw the retirement of Mr. N.C. Chaudhuri, Executive Vice Chairman and Mr. J. Mukherjee. Both Mr. Chaudhuri and Mr. Mukherjee have made significant contributions during their careers with the Company and on behalf of all the shareholders I would like to express our particular gratitude to them and wish them well. Mr. R.J. Palmer and Mr. M. Morgan, erstwhile representatives of Huntley & Palmer, resigned from your Board during the year and I am sure you will wish to record our appreciation for the valuable services rendered by them while serving on the Board.

Apart from myself, Mr. M.F.C. Emmett, Mr. B. Healey, Mr. J.M. Rajan Pillai and Mr. N. Balasubramanian were also inducted to your Board in January this year. Mr. Emmett and Mr. Healey have not unfortunately found it possible to spare the time from their other commitments and responsibilities and have resigned as of October 1, 1983. I should like, with your concurrence, to record our appreciation of their valuable contribution to the affairs of the Company. I also take this opportunity to formally welcome Mr. J.M. Rajan Pillai who was appointed Senior Vice Chairman, Mr. N. Balasubramanian and Mr. A.K. Ganguly who joined the Board in September. They are all men of considerable experience and of great value to your Company and I have no doubt that the resolutions concerning their appointment tabled separately will have your approval.

Finally, it is a matter of considerable satisfaction and encouragement to all of us to continue to have your support and confidence in the Company and its Management. I would like to assure you that your Board will spare no efforts in our common endeavour of making Britannia even stronger and more prosperous in the years to come.

Thank you.

NOTE: This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

LINTAS BIL MSC 265

...some Congress(I) workers recently are still pending."

Other prominent Congressmen from the region have protested to the prime minister that the state leadership's enthusiastic coming of prodigals will prove counterproductive. But party workers who support the Congress(I) are confident that this will really help the Congress(I) to face the Opposition's challenge in the coming parliamentary elections. Retorted Anand Sharma, general secretary, Indian Youth Congress(I) from Madhya Pradesh: "One should not look at people with a narrow and selfish motive. After all, the only objective of all Congressmen is to strengthen the hands of our Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi. Let those who believe in it come and join." So at the general elections, at least, the welfare mat is laid out for all former Congressmen.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

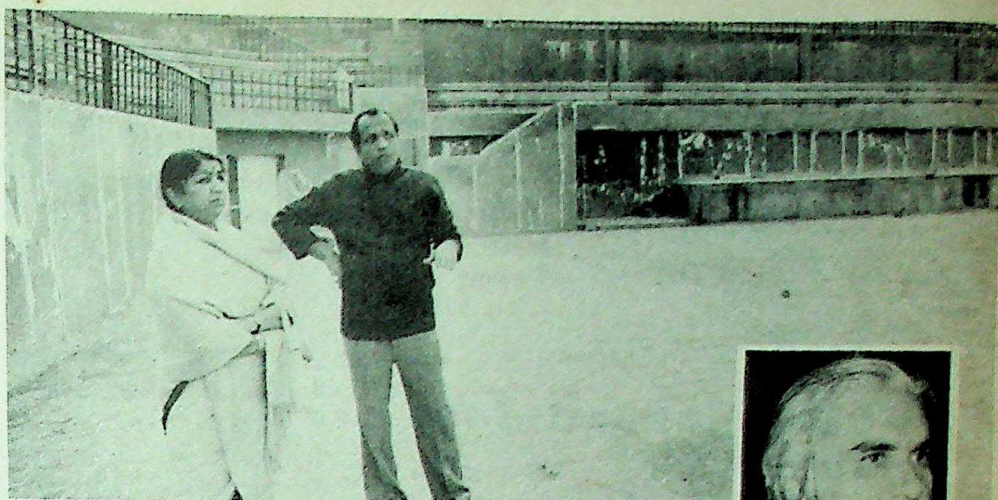
MADHYA PRADESH

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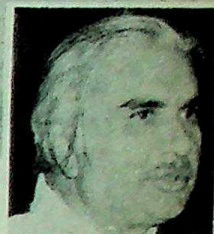
TO MILLIONS of her fans, Lata Mangeskar is synonymous with melodic harmony. But in her own birthplace last fortnight, a public performance by her was at the centre of an acrid verbal warfare. The superstar's performance in Indore on December 4 was to collect money for Rs 1 crore indoor stadium-cum-sports complex which is under construction in this, the largest city of Madhya Pradesh.

The stadium, which will be the third largest in the country, is the pet project of press magnate Abhay Chhajlani, chairman of the Madhya Pradesh Table Tennis Association (MPTTA), at whose instigation the melody queen sang. But instead of the bouquets such occasions normally bring, Chhajlani found himself at the receiving end of a volley of brickbats. His crying argued that he was misusing his clout as editor of the state's largest newspaper *Nai Duniya* (print run: 1 lakh), not only to get his way with the Government, but also to build himself up in the public eye.

The volatile local MLA, Suresh Seth, a cabinet minister, who spearheaded the attack, says: "I have nothing personal against Lata Mangeskar or anybody else. This table tennis trust is a one-man show by Chhajlani. Why should they be subsidised with public money?" Seth adds that the Government machinery was involved in a big way and that the show was exempted from Government tax. Therefore, he says, the Government should claim the box-office collections.



Seth (inset) and Chhajlani showing Mangeskar around: public money at stake



The silver-haired Seth, who incidentally is also editor of the daily *Indore Samachar*, first tried to stall the show by sending a telegram to the singer in Bombay. When that did not work, he organised demonstrations in Indore which led to his arrest along with some of his supporters.

Chhajlani, who is vice-president of the Table Tennis Federation of India, has attracted both criticism and admiration for his dedication to the project, which even while still incomplete, is impressive. Rectangular in shape, it will seat more than 6,000 and has a playing arena of 14,000 sq ft—to be used for basketball, badminton and volleyball, apart from Chhajlani's favourite sport, table tennis.

The 50-year-old Chhajlani says: "The idea first emerged in 1974 when the responsibility for holding the Table Tennis Nationals fell on Indore. I was then president of the Madhya Pradesh Table Tennis Association (MPTTA). But for lack of space, we had to organise it in the godown of the local mill. We realised that if Indore was to become a sports centre, we had to have an indoor stadium where tournaments could be held. That is how it all started."

Impressive Record: Chhajlani points to his record to prove his success in the promotion of table tennis during his eight-year tenure as president of MPTTA beginning 1974. Says he: "Between then and now, the number of players registered with the association has risen from merely 300 to 2,000. In the state championships, more than 400 players participated. When I took over, in various team events, Madhya Pradesh used to rank between sixteenth and twenty-second in the country. Today our teams figure from the second position to the tenth. Isn't that a marked improvement?"

Even his bitterest critics cannot deny that the improvement of table tennis in the state has been remarkable. But what they do

question is the use of his influence to gather funds. So far, out of the estimated cost of Rs 1 crore, about Rs 60 lakh have gone into the construction. Of this, Rs 3 lakh came from the Centre, Rs 16.25 lakh from the state Government, Rs 15 lakh as loan from a co-operative bank in Indore and about Rs 25 lakh from public donations in the city. Says one critic, also a sports official: "There is not a single instance in the entire country where the Government has assisted a non-government body to such a large extent in the construction of a stadium."

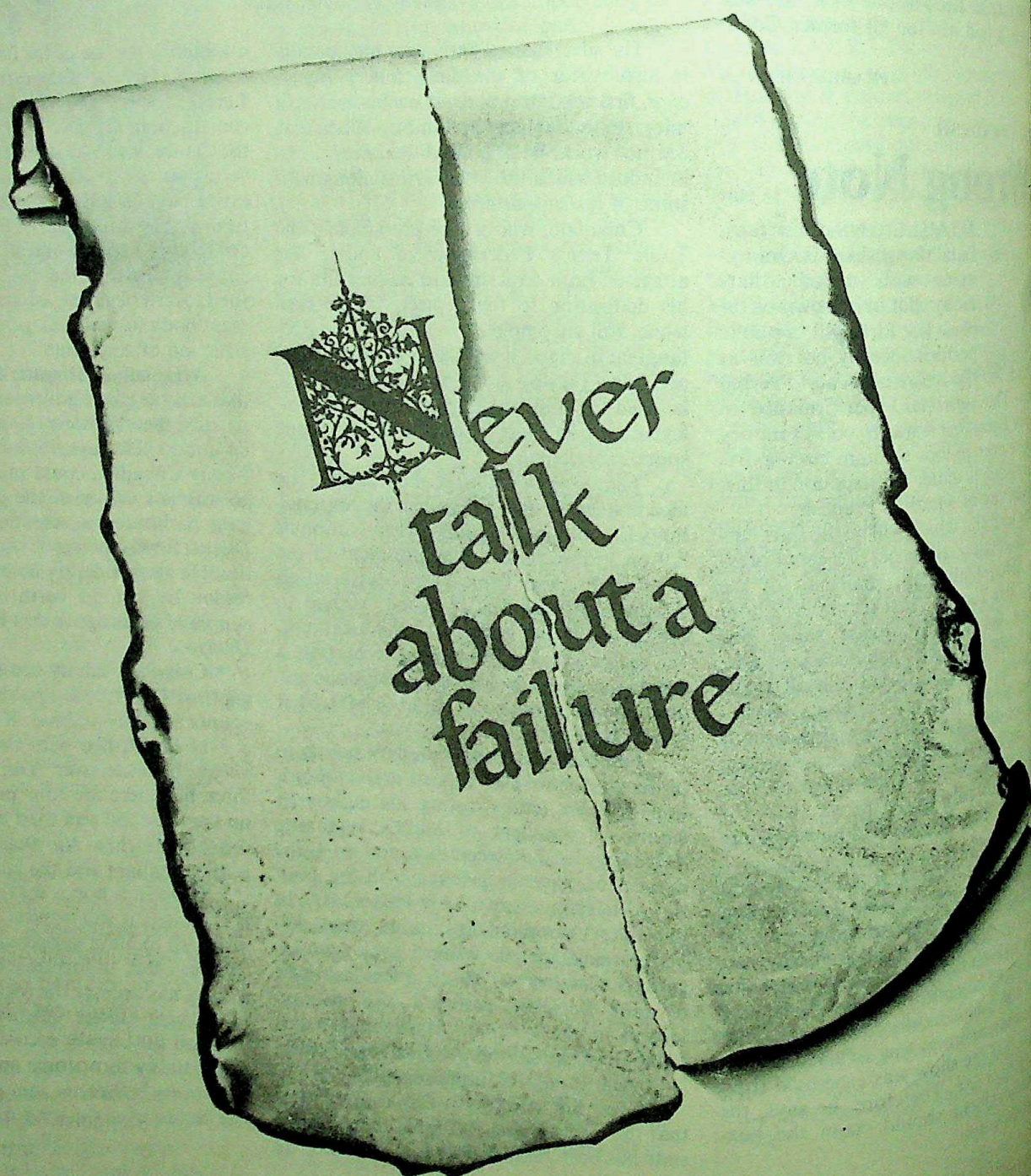
Acrimonious Dispute: Seth also alleges that in some cases, government officials have misused their authority to pressurise potential donors. He says: "I would like to see if Abhay Chhajlani could raise the finances if he was not owner of the paper." Seth has long harboured a resentment against *Nai Duniya* for the power it wields in state politics. He also evidently believes that a major reason he lost his berth in the Cabinet a couple of years ago is that he fell foul of *Nai Duniya*.

Chhajlani calmly brushes aside all allegations: "The ITTT is a public trust whose accounts are duly audited. If the Government is ever dissatisfied with its working, it can always be taken over. Yes, I am the driving force but there are four prominent citizens on the trust too and their approval is required." Meanwhile, *Nai Duniya* often features both Chhajlani and the stadium.

Chhajlani hopes that once the stadium is complete, it will inspire other sports organisations to build infrastructure in their own spheres. But unfortunately the ambitious project has become the focus of jealousy and resentment among officials of other sports who, off the record, accuse the Government of partiality to a single sport. The stadium has, even before its inauguration, become the centre of a slanging match.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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THE ARMY

General Sinha's Story

THERE was a discernible element of embarrassment in the one-line release that emanated last fortnight from the public relations section of the Defence Ministry stating that Lt-General S.K. Sinha had officially taken premature retirement. The embarrassment was unavoidable. Less than six months ago, Sinha, after being groomed to take over as army chief, was unceremoniously superseded in a move that smacked of Byzantine political intrigue. Sinha promptly put in his papers and his dignified exit was an effective counterpoint to the shoddy manner in which he had been treated.

Sinha had been brought in as vice-chief in January 1983 after heading Western Command, India's most strategic combat force. He



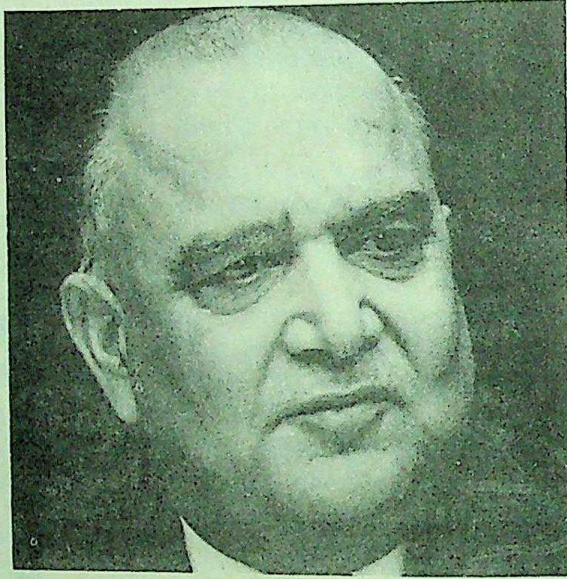
Venkataraman made the clumsy suggestion through an intermediary that Sinha should go and meet him as he could "do a lot for him."

was obviously being groomed as the next chief, once General Krishna Rao retired by the middle of the year. But barely hours before the announcement, he was overlooked in favour of Lt-General A.S. Vaidya, the current chief. The resulting controversy only intensified as the Defence Ministry made repeated and clumsy efforts to play the issue down as much as possible.

Since then, the controversy has abated and Sinha has refrained from talking about his final days in office and the manner of his supersession. Senior Writer DILIP BOBB has been trying to piece together the sequence of events that terminated the career of one of the country's outstanding strategists. Conversations with sources in the ministry and in the upper echelons of the army were rounded off last fortnight with a frank and exclusive talk with Sinha himself. Below is the untold story of the sequence of events that forced Sinha into early retirement.

THE MEDIA had already taken his ascendancy for granted by the time the midnight call from New York awoke Lt-General Sinha one night in mid-May. The caller was his daughter Minnie who was completing her Ph.D. course in the US. "Congratulations daddy on your becoming the chief," she said excitedly. Sinha calmed her down by saying that the official decision was still awaited. But Minnie's source was unimpeachable—Lalita Krishna Rao, daughter of the army chief, who was also in the US at the time.

The authenticity was buttressed by the fact that the two families had been close friends for nearly 40 years. When Krishna Rao was appointed chief, the Sinhas had



General Sinha: emotional response

driven up specially to Simla and stayed with the Raos to celebrate the occasion. Even at that stage Krishna Rao made no effort to hide the wish that Sinha should succeed him. He even told Sinha that he would be taking over Western Command, since it was advisable for a future chief to have served as army commander in that command. Significantly, he also remarked that Sinha would be taking over from him at Simla (Western Command headquarters) and would later also be taking over from him at New Delhi. In fact, he repeated this to senior colleagues on numerous occasions as well as to an MP, the editor of a newspaper and two current governors.

Firm Belief: In January 1983 when Sinha took over as vice-chief he was instructed to operate on the assumption that he would be the next chief. In late May, against official norms which do not permit the chief and vice-chief to be out of Delhi at

the same time, Rao obtained special permission to take Sinha with him to a conference to select generals to discuss future tactical concepts. Sinha's presence was justified on grounds that as the next chief he should be part of the discussions. If any doubt remained, Krishna Rao quickly spelled them when he asked Sinha to attend a similar conference in 1984 when he would be chief. Nobody, at least in informed circles, had any reservations about the new appointment except for the date of the announcement that would make it official.

Then the bombshell dropped. Less than 48 hours after their return from Simla, Sinha and Rao were closeted in the latter's quarters when the telephone rang. At the end of the conversation he asked his military secretary to get him Lt-General Vaidya in Calcutta. Then, without any trace of emotion, he coolly informed Sinha that "the Government has decided that Vaidya should



Evidently under pressure from the top, Rao issued a statement defending Vaidya's appointment and General Sinha's supersession...

ceed me". For a minute, Sinha sat before he reacted with the statement that would be putting in his papers. Krishna Rao tried to talk Sinha out of it but it was clear that he wouldn't succeed.

Political Pressure: The controversy came as no surprise. The supersession created an immediate storm both in the media and in military circles where it was regarded as an unprecedented and opened the doors for politicisation of the services. That political part in the decision was a last-minute surprise appointment was obviously the decision that was obviously the result of political pressure from the very top. That Rao himself was unaware till the last minute is ample indication. The inquiries have confirmed that the decision came from the prime minister's office but that the decision itself was instigated

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Defence Minister R. Venkataraman.

The reasons are still not very clear. Sinha clearly was no establishment man as Vaidya's earlier statements had clearly indicated he was. Evidently under pressure from the top, Rao issued statements defending Vaidya's appointment and Sinha's supersession. Since the day he told Sinha of the decision, he had not met or spoken to him even though the two men occupied adjacent offices. Perhaps he was being a loyal soldier, but in a dramatic reversal of his earlier stand, Rao issued an official statement that merit-cum-seniority had been the criteria for the selection and combat experience had also been a deciding factor.

It was an unusual statement in more ways than one. An army chief who is retiring is not required to make recommendations about his successor. Says Sinha: "Krishna and I used to be the best of friends. Unfortunately, we never met after my supersession even though we served in adjacent offices in Delhi for two months after the announcement. Good generals are supposed to mislead and mystify their enemies about their plans. He must be a very good general if he can do that to his closest friends as well." Rao, now settled in Hyderabad, refused to comment any further than what he had already stated at the time of Vaidya's appointment.

SINHA then went on to recall the painful days of early June when the Government tried to clumsily buy his silence with loyalty. On June 2, the day that newspapers headlined his resignation, the Director of Public Relations, Ministry of Defence, Ramamohan Rao, came to see Sinha with a message from the then defence secretary, N. Kaul. Kaul's message was that Sinha could withdraw his resignation so that a contradiction could be issued to the press and a controversy avoided. As extra bait, he added that if that were done, the Government could then "settle the matter amicably". Sinha flatly rejected the suggestion and stated that no carrot was going to tempt him to withdraw his resignation.

The next step in the sordid saga was for the ministry to assemble about two dozen correspondents and ask Sinha to meet them. The strategy was that in his upset state, Sinha would make statements that would erode popular sympathy with his principled stand. Sinha refused, a third attempt was made. This time the message conveyed on behalf of the Defence Minister R. Venkataraman was that he had "high regard" for Sinha along with the clumsy suggestion that he "do a lot for him". Sinha again politely refused and said if the minister wanted to

see him all he had to do was make the request which Sinha, being a serving officer, would naturally accede to. A final attempt was made that evening when a Congress(I) chief minister arrived at Sinha's house to deliver precisely the same message yet again—and received precisely the same reply.

Debate Generated: Considering the circumstances, Sinha avoided the traditional round of farewells but decided that it was only proper that he should finally meet the defence minister before leaving even though Venkataraman had been party to the entire affair. When six opposition MP's had issued a statement on Sinha's supersession, Venkataraman had sent a warning message to Sinha which flatly stated that it would be harmful to him if a debate were started in Parliament. He also tried to bring pressure on Sinha to issue a statement saying he did not want a debate to which Sinha replied that if MP's wanted a debate how could he stop it.

Sinha's suspicions of Venkataraman's involvement in his supersession was partly confirmed when he paid his farewell call. The meeting turned out to be a stiffly formal one with all the normal formalities dispensed with. "Almost 40 years of service for the country and my position as number two man of the Indian Army apparently was not enough to qualify me for a cup of tea with the minister," he said. Ironically, the discussion centred around the minister's advice that he should be careful of politicians as they would "exploit him"—an ironical statement considering that Venkataraman is himself a member of that club.

Admirable Stand: In retrospect, however, the hidden meaning behind the warning was clear. Sinha's stand on the supersession issue has been greatly admired. He has received hundreds of letters of congratulations on his manner of handling the affair, mainly from serving officers. The day he left Delhi, a large number of army officers in full uniform defiantly showed up at Palam to wish him well including 30 serving generals. In Patna, where he lives, the public response to the whole affair has been equally emotional, especially since Sinha is the first Bihari to have risen to the rank of general in the Indian Army.

Already, the pressure on him to join politics is increasing daily. He has been approached by senior opposition leaders trying to woo him into their folds since Sinha, specially in Bihar, would be a potent political vote-getter. So far, he has resisted the advances. Says he: "It is something I am considering among many other alternatives. Right now I can't see any party that I would like to join. They all lack credibility." Clearly Sinha has lost the battle but not the war. In fact, that may have just begun.

TAMIL NADU

Selection Squabble

THE BEGINNING of the academic year usually heralds the annual open season on admission policies for professional courses. This became dramatically evident at the end of last month when hearings began in the Madras High Court on a record 150 petitions filed against the selection of candidates to the MBBS course in the eight medical colleges of Tamil Nadu. With over 10,000 applicants for the 1,040 seats available, the selection process got both protracted and acrimonious, and unsuccessful candidates alleged nepotism, large-scale manipulation and political interference in the choice of candidates.

Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, named in one of the petitions, also found himself involved in the legal battle and filed a counter-affidavit on November 25. But with so much noise and heat generated over the whole issue, the high court ordered the Directorate of Medical Education to hold, if available, 100 seats in reserve until the petitions were disposed of. Commented R. Karuppan, an advocate representing many of the petitioners: "Like Caesar's wife, medical admissions have not only to be above reproach, they must also appear to be above reproach, and that surely is not the case now."

Evidently, this year's admissions did allow room for controversy. Interviews of candidates were still being held until the beginning of September, according to a counter-affidavit from the Government, with the final results being published only on October 1. Petitioners, however, contend that the results were finalised as early as end-August, and the month's delay in announcing them can only be imputed to suspicious motives.

But the Government states categorically: "It is absolutely incorrect to say that the Government had retained the list for a long time to manipulate it or alter it. The list was submitted on the morning of October 1 and was approved by the Government the same evening." Denying that the list was for an inordinately long time in the possession of Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, who is expected to formally clear it after approval, Dr Lalitha Kameswaran, director of medical education, says: "Though the admission list was finalised around end-August, I don't re-

member the exact date, we could show it to the chief minister only on October 2, (he wasn't free before that date) and the same evening the list was published."

Contentious Point: However, the very process of selection is being disputed. Instead of a regular separate entrance examination, the marks obtained in the school finals, which are the qualifying examinations—whether set by the state board, the central board, or any other institution recognised as being equivalent—are being considered as the basis for admission. While 200 marks are being given for that, an additional 30 marks are provided for the interview to which every candidate is called.



It is the interview that is proving most contentious. In the petition filed on behalf of his minor daughter Tarakeswari, who scored 87 per cent in science in her school finals, V. Krishnamoorthy, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam MLA alleges that she was selected, only to have her name knocked out from the list when it went to the chief minister. Says he: "As we belong to the backward community, Tarakeswari needed to score just 11 out of the total 30 marks in the interview, and it was impossible for her not to make it."

Other petitioners have also complained that the interview were being manipulated to favour candidates already decided upon. The fact that S. Radha, who scored a meritorious 91.5 per cent in science, and S. Suthanthira, who did almost as well with an aggregate of 86.7 per cent did not figure in the admission lists, might well lend credence to their allegation.

MGR himself admitted that the system might be less than perfect when he announced in the Legislative Council on

November 23 that "the present system of admission to professional colleges (in the state) would be changed from next year to ensure that it is flawless." However, Kameswaran chose to defend the existing system. Said he: "It is not necessary to conduct a separate entrance examination under the rules of the Medical Council of India. The rules of selection either through an entrance examination or through performance in a qualifying examination." But indications are that the rumpus might have had some effect. Finance Minister V.R. Nedunchezhiyan said in the house on November 23 that the Government is keen on having a system like the one adopted at JIPMER (Jawahar Institute of Post-graduate Medical Education and Research) in Pondicherry, which conducted the entrance test."

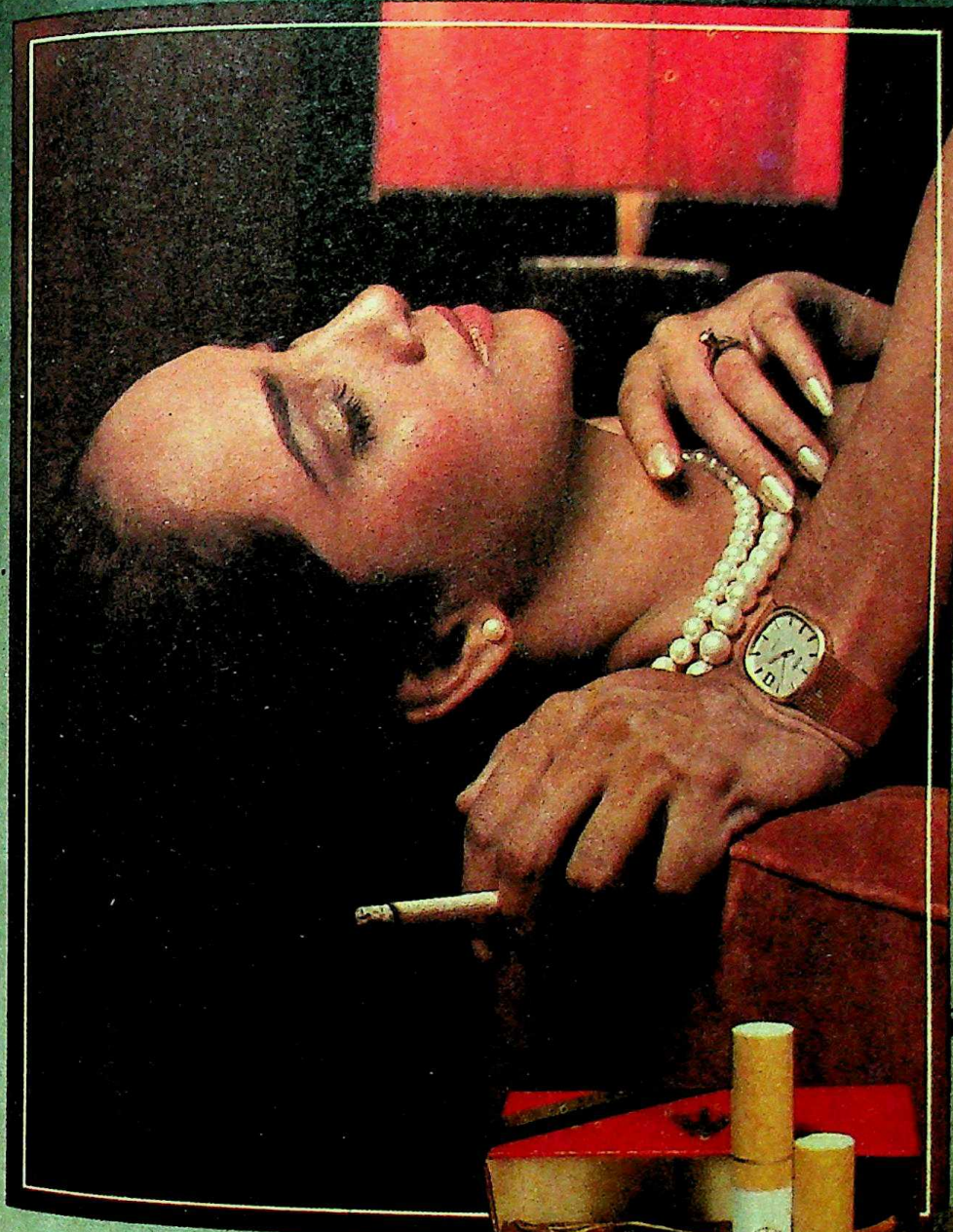
Favouritism: Equally serious are allegations of nepotism. The wards and relatives of some of the doctors and professors who serve on the 11 selection committees applied for admission, and some were selected. Though Kameswaran maintained that there is no way of avoiding such a situation, reliable sources aver that there are a number of qualified civil surgeons who could pass this particular test but were not chosen.

The Government's ad hoc attitude to reservation has also come under fire. In 1981, the year of the last general election, the Government had allotted a 3 per cent reservation for disabled candidates, but this year the quota was slashed from over 30 seats to mere three, reserved for only the orthopaedically handicapped. Unsuccessful candidate M. Mathuranayagam, who has a hearing defect, has challenged the entire reservation policy without justification or notification. Mathuranayagam, in addition to having scored 75 per cent in his qualifying examination, is also an expert in billiards and snooker, besides being an accomplished musician—this alone should have stood him in good stead at the interview, in which six marks were reserved for proficiency in extra-curricular activities.

But with the petitioners warring in a full-scale courtroom battle, complete with vehement allegations and just as spirited refutations from a defensive government, it became clear that unless serious efforts were made to reform the system, the controversy could only get more bitter every year.

—S.H. VENKATARAMAN

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Modest Harvest

ALMOST all multinational conferences these days begin with a big media bang and end in a political or diplomatic whimper. The Commonwealth summit in New Delhi was no exception. A lot of things happen at these conferences—speeches, press conferences, banquets, behind-the-scenes negotiation, tortuous struggles over phrases and punctuation, and long, boring communiques—but nothing really changes. Examples: the Non-aligned summit held in March has had practically no impact on the sorry drift of world affairs. Or has the UNCTAD session in Belgrade.

No one expected the Commonwealth conference to set the Ganga aflame. However, when heads of government of 42 nations, black, brown and white, assemble for just a week, it cannot be entirely a non-event. The 59-paragraph communique brought out the lowest common agreement and consensus of a group of countries that are adequately divided in their outlook and interests. Communiques commit no government to any action. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Foreign Minister Narasimha claimed within and outside Parliament

that by putting their signatures to the CHOGM communique, they did not compromise India's position on any international issue, they were not lying. If India is not to be guided by the phrasing of the communique, nor is any of the other 42 countries that took part in the November summit.

Defying Moulds: Multinational conferences these days fall mainly into three categories. There are mobilisation conferences like the Non-aligned summit. There are conferences of countries bound together by common and shared interests, outlooks and institutions. And there are conferences of countries knit together in alliances or blocs. The Commonwealth defies all three moulds. It has been called a "club" or a "family". But it is neither. It has three western members and 41 who belong to Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. The only link between them is the English language.

The Commonwealth, however, has not been entirely without success. Several years ago CHOGM thrashed out a formula for the solution of the Rhodesian crisis. The result was the birth of Zimbabwe as a sovereign African state ruled by its overwhelming

black majority. The Delhi summit, alas, has had no such luck. The issues confronting it—the American invasion of Grenada, the arbitrary decision by the Turkish population of Cyprus to set up a separate Turkish-Cypriot state, Lebanon, Namibia, apartheid in South Africa and the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union—were clearly beyond the reach of its wits and resources. It was less potent than the NAM summit or the UNCTAD session at Belgrade to grapple with the tragic disarray in the world monetary and economic system.

Even then the discussions were not without the gnashing of teeth and the baring of claws. Grenada divided the small pro-US nations of the Caribbean and their larger sisters of the same geographic region. The latter were backed by some of the African countries who saw in the American invasion of Grenada a dangerous precedent for South Africa to eliminate unacceptable black regimes close to its borders. The eastern Caribbean countries who had invited the United States to invade Grenada had, of course, the full backing of the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and some other members, notably Singapore. On Namibia and world economic issues Thatcher and Mrs Gandhi led two mutually warring groups. Wranglings between Mrs Gandhi and the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke over



Mrs Gandhi and Thatcher with other leaders at CHOGM: lively discussions

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phrasing of a sentence in the paragraph dealing with Palestine—the Australian prime minister insisted on substituting "the Palestinian issue"—the release of the Delhi statement by the hour.

Tame Communique: In the end, however, the Commonwealth summit came up with a sensible communique bereft of anything startlingly original. It kept itself strictly confined to generalities, skating past pressing and taxing details. For instance, it called upon the Soviet Union, the United States and other powers—though not by name—to withdraw their troops from a number of countries where foreign military intervention continues to take place. Similarly, it urged the United States and the Soviet Union to resume negotiations for the limitation and control of nuclear weapons. It called for a negotiated settlement of the dangerously escalating conflicts in Central America. It condemned the policy of apartheid and urged international economic sanctions against South Africa.

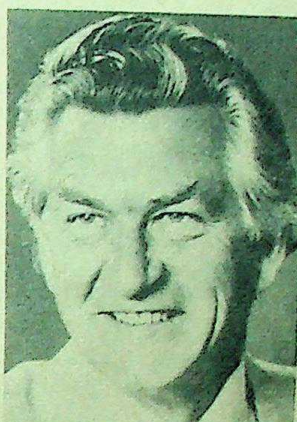
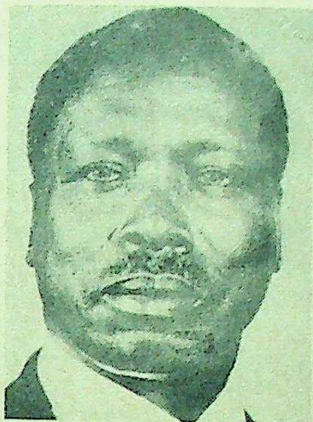
On Grenada, it showed wisdom in declaring that "the emphasis should now be on reconstruction, not recreation", and expressing the hope that free and fair elections "could be held in that small country without 'external interference or presence of foreign military forces'". It rejected the African and South American attempt to link the independence of Namibia to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. And it asked the secretaries-general to undertake a study of the "special needs" of small states in the context of economic development consonant with their right to sovereignty and territorial integrity. The only decision the Delhi summit was to set up a special Commonwealth "action group" on Cyprus with five countries as members, including India.

A modest harvest from seven days' work of 42 countries representing one-fifth of mankind. Nevertheless, a competition ensued between India and Britain for glamour and the glory of the summit. Indian newspapers, aided and abetted by an official propaganda machine, claimed that the summit belonged to the host country, especially Mrs Gandhi. *The Hindustan Times*, for example, reported that along with the members of the "action group", "India in the coming months play an active role in discharging the mandate bestowed on it to take steps to meet the global economic and restore the unity of Cyprus." Television and radio, predictably enough, portrayed Mrs Gandhi as the pivotal figure of the conference.

Others, however, saw the conference

differently. The US media practically ignored CHOGM. It received only limited coverage in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The three reports that appeared in *The New York Times* said nothing about India's views on Grenada or the Middle East and did not mention CHOGM's concern for a new international economic order. Mrs Gandhi was mentioned only once, in the context of the debate on Namibia.

Limited Coverage: In England, *The Times* gave front page coverage to the



Moi (left) and Hawke: conflicting viewpoints

summit on November 25 and 30. In a 84-line report on November 25 by its own correspondent, India was not even mentioned. On November 30, what *The Times* found worth reporting was the wrangling between Mrs Gandhi and the Australian prime minister over the phrasing of the paragraph relating to Palestine. One of the headlines in *The Times* read: "Commonwealth Bows to the Force of Mrs Thatcher's Logic." The report ran partly as follows: "On virtually every issue of contention between Mrs Thatcher and the other members of the Commonwealth, her views prevailed so much so that observers from Third World countries were commenting last night (November 29) that the British prime minister's firmness had rendered many Commonwealth initiatives negative and reduced the communique to a bland statement that even Mrs Gandhi characterised in a press conference last night as 'containing nothing new'."

The Times correspondent asked Thatcher if the debate had changed her mind on any of the issues. "No, Sir!" she snapped. Thatcher later declared in the reception room of the British high commissioner's residence that she was pleased that she had been able to "get across" not only the British view but the view of the western alliance on East-West tensions and nuclear disarmament. *The Times* report claimed that the statement on Namibia, Grenada and world economy, the three issues that consumed most of the time of the Commonwealth summit, reflected Thatcher's position.

Mrs Gandhi's speeches received more coverage in Kenya and Nigeria than perhaps in any other Commonwealth country. *The Kenya Times*, a government-owned mass circulation tabloid, sent its own correspondent to New Delhi. Mrs Gandhi's inaugural speech received 68 lines in this newspaper on November 26 in a report of 136 lines. However, the focus of *The Kenya Times* was naturally on President Daniel Arap Moi. On November 23 he was reported to have received a "rousing welcome" in Delhi. On November 26 a front page report of 160 lines was splashed by the paper under the headline, "Moi Saves The Day". There was only a single reference to Indira Gandhi in the same article. *The Kenya Times*' summing up of the conference paid no particular attention to the contributions made by India to the summit's achievements—or otherwise.

In Nigeria the government-owned *Daily Times* gave less space to the Indian contribution than its Kenyan contemporary. For the pro-government Nigerian press the hero was President Shagari. The privately owned Nigerian tabloid *National Concord*, an opposition daily, was indifferent not only to the Commonwealth summit but even to the Nigerian President. On November 24 it carried a 25-line report of Shagari's speech in a news item banished to the bottom of page 8 of that edition.

In an editorial *The Times* condescendingly gave "pass mark" to Delhi for hosting the summit. The British Queen reportedly did not enjoy the distance that was kept between her and CHOGM. In India *The Hindu* found the commonwealth to be plodding on; the *Indian Express* picked up secretary general S.S. Ramphal's phrase to call it "something of a lantern". *The Hindustan Times* was probably the only newspaper to run a seven-column banner for the prime minister's speech at the inaugural session. An appropriate editorial in the daily proclaimed: "CHOGM Does It".

CHOGM or Margaret Thatcher? Patrick Keatley who reported the Delhi summit for *The Guardian* of London, was probably closer to the reality than any other reporter. He found out that Thatcher rode through the summit session as a "leading exponent of the invisible veto"—of US President Ronald Reagan—even though he had in the immediately preceding weeks ordered the invasion of Grenada and the bombing of Syrian positions in Lebanon without so much as consulting the Iron Lady of Britain, though she is said to be his closest political ally.

—BHABANI SEN GUPTA

PUNJAB

Fortress for the Faith

GURU Nanak Niwas in the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar was the scene of some hectic activity last fortnight. Passers-by watched with surprise as labourers hauled heavy sandbags up on the terrace of the six-storey abode of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and a myriad other extremist groups. But the real action was on the terrace where Bhindranwale's armed supporters busied themselves stacking the sandbags in all corners of the terrace, to make tall gun emplacements. Masons were at work too, breaking down the parapet in places, to cut battlements protected by reinforced brick walls. The build-up was methodical to the last detail; even dhurries had been spread behind the sandbag gun emplacements and battlements to make things comfortable for the gunmen.

There was tension in the air which steadily rose higher, following heated debates in Parliament on Punjab and, more specifically, Bhindranwale. For two full days, the demand for action against the fire-eating 36-year-old cut across party lines as nothing else had done in the recent past as the Government found itself on the mat.

Home Minister Prakash Chand Sethi, as is his wont, blew hot and cold even as the security agencies worked out imaginary plans as if a showdown was imminent. Sethi's concluding statement—a meek request to the Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal and the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) President Gurcharan Singh Tohra to hand over Bhindranwale to the police—made the whole exercise end in a whimper.

Strong Steps: But for the first time since the Deputy Inspector General of Police, A.S. Atwal, was murdered at the doorstep of the Golden Temple, the Government seemed to contemplate taking some strong action against the extremists hiding in the precincts of the temple. In Chandigarh, police and civil officers were looking at the files to gather all the evidence they could muster against Bhindranwale and legal experts were trying to work out a strategy to move courts for declaring him a proclaimed offender.

It was in the course of this exercise that the Centre discovered the embarrassing truth that, in legal terms, it really did not have very much against Bhindranwale—nine cases under Section 505 and 506 of the IPC (making inflammatory speeches) which could, at worst, attract a three-year prison term. Confessed a senior officer in Chandigarh: "It's really shocking that we have so little against him while we keep blaming him

for all sorts of things. You certainly cannot assault the temple on the basis of just these charges, get hundreds of people killed and get away with it."

But inside the temple precincts, no one seemed to be in a mood to take the Government lightly and the sandbags and battlements on the Guru Nanak Niwas terrace were only one of the aspects for the show-down preparations. The various extremist groups had already dispersed their men and weapons all over the temple premises, leaving the respective serais to the east of the temple—where they have been staying—in smug isolation.

Brand-new pistols could be seen hanging on the waists of even those, like the so-called secretary-general of the national council of Khalistan, Balbir Singh Sandhu, who did not normally carry firearms earlier. There suddenly seems to have been a fresh infusion of weapons in the Bhindranwale camp and at least two of his close supporters can be seen carrying Soviet-made AK-47 (Kalashnikov) assault rifles.

But most significantly, as sources in the temple and intelligence agencies confirm, Bhindranwale has stopped sleeping in the Guru Nanak Niwas, preferring the security of the Akal Takht building instead. As the fortnight ended it became increasingly clear to the Government that a decision to act would not just mean invading the Guru Nanak Niwas but the entire temple complex, including the Akal Takht. And that was something no Sikh, not even the staunchest opponent of Bhindranwale, was going to accept.

Well Armed: In any case the bunch of Sikhs that Bhindranwale and the other chiefs of the smaller groups commanded inside the picturesque temple complex were not going to take any of that. In their bid to gauge the real strength of the extremists inside the walled area, the security agencies found that at any time of the day Bhindranwale had at least 50 to 60 hard core supporters, armed to the teeth and willing to fight to the end. There were, in addition, at least 200 others who would fight. Said a police officer: "If the Government really gets adventurous it will entail huge losses. For the men in the temple include a number of those wanted in connection with cases of murder and have no hope of survival outside. They will fight to the finish."

The men around Bhindranwale make

Stacked sandbags on the Guru Nanak Niwas: methodical preparations

up the bulk of the list of 45 wanted men. The home minister tabled in Parliament last month. These include Sarwan Singh, Anandjit Singh and Gurnam Singh, all former police havildars, Surinder Singh, a former inspector in the agriculture department, Tarsem Singh, Wadhawa Singh, Anokh Singh, all in the list of 91 proclaimed offenders in serious cases and known experts in the handling of firearms. And they are not alone. In the neighbourhood of Guru Ram Dass Serai, is the headquarters of the



even more militant and avowedly violent Babbar Akali Dal, an outfit of nearly 50 all-armed men whose objective, quite openly, is the establishment of Khalsa Raj. Says Sukhdev Singh "Babbar", its officiating chief: "We don't care what Bhindranwale, Jagowal and the others want. As far as we are concerned the objective now is complete freedom."

While the attention of the media and the government has been grabbed by Bhindranwale and his men, the Babbar Akalis have

steadily built themselves into an organisation of strong nuisance value, plastering the walls inside the temple complex with secessionist posters with slogans like: "You can't save the faith without political power and you can't get political power without arms," and asking people to recreate a Sikh sovereign state of the kind Maharaja Ranjit Singh had.

Whereas Bhindranwale has publicly disowned each act of the extremists, the Babbar Akalis openly claim credit for most

of these, barring the killings of Hindu bus passengers and that of Atwal. "It is a great sin to pardon a sinner. We must not show him any mercy. Even Atwal deserved to die but not at the doorstep of the Durbar Sahib," says Sukhdev Singh, a towering man in his mid-thirties, dressed in flowing blue robes like all other Babbar Akalis who came together shortly after the April 13, 1978 Nirankari-Sikh clash in which 13 died.

Deadly Groups: Many of the group's members were earlier in the Akhand Kirtani



Jatha which lost eight lives in the clash. Initially they began terrorist activity under the jatha against the Nirankaris now headed by Bibi Amarjit Kaur, the widow of Fauja Singh, who had led the ill-fated procession.

They subsequently broke off in the course of time to join the group launched independently by Talvinder Singh, a devout Canada-based Sikh currently under Interpol custody and for whose extradition two Punjab police officers have been camping in West Germany. Says Sukhdev Singh: "We left the jatha because we realised that under the Indian law and Constitution we would never have got justice. We also have nothing

to do with Bhindranwale who is basically a coward. Why else did he have to back out of leading the procession against the Nirankaris after having pledged to do that?"

Though the Babbar Akalis are a group much smaller than Bhindranwale's they have added a new factor to the complicated balance of forces inside the temple which already has another group in the Akhand Kirtani Jatha which, however, confines itself to vendetta killings against the Nirankaris. The jatha has, however, been rapidly losing cadres to the Babbar Akalis. Early in the morning, the Babbar Akalis, who are believed to be the best-knit group, can be

seen playing hockey and exercising on the serai terrace. They dismiss all talk of training and arms. Claims Sukhdev Singh: "If the Pakistanis give us arms we will say no. But we hardly need training. We have been in the army or police. It was the Government that gave us the training." But the group which has hit the headlines now for armed training is the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), the student wing of the Akali Dal now commanded by a leadership deeply loyal to Bhindranwale and operating out of Guru Nanak Dev University. Sethi repeatedly accused the federation of holding 14 armed training camps for

J.S. BHINDRANWALE

Lying Low

PUNJAB has been dominated by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, saint to some, devil incarnate to others, ever since the state shot into the limelight in 1981. Often he personifies the Punjab story, and newsmen have worn their shoes out making tracks for his abode, the wide terrace of the six-storey Guru Nanak Niwas in the precincts of Amritsar's Golden Temple complex. INDIA TODAY Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA has met the controversial 36-year-old on six occasions, the first in 1980 while he was still relatively unknown, campaigning against the Akali candidates in the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) elections. Last fortnight found the irrepressible Bhindranwale in a different mood. A report:

FOR NEWSMEN, he has always been good copy, quick to comment on anything under the sun with his acerbic wit laced with earthy Punjabi repartee. But over the past couple of years, Bhindranwale has come to be known more for his bluntness and bullying, full of bluster and a little bluff. "No one gives you interviews like I do," he often says, bubbling with confidence. Over the months, he has acquired a certain skill in dealing with the media: "No devotee returns from the Durbar Sahib without his wishes fulfilled, and none of you return from this place without your story."

The terrace was his pulpit, where he insisted on speaking to newsmen in front of his rustic audience, punctuating his replies with colourful remarks aimed to amuse the populace. Jokes about the visiting scribes were common: "You don't have a beard like all your gods and pro-

phets, who were your fathers. What do you call a child that does not resemble his father?" And every once in a while he would tell his audience how he was making a "ghuggu" (an untranslatable Punjabiism the meaning of which can at

best be conveyed by "a dumbfounded moron") out of "this wise guy who thought he was cat's whiskers".

But he would always be friendly, passing around apples from the heap of fruit and blank cassettes that the devotees



Bhindranwale: unusually defensive

exercising... last year—six of these in Jammu & Kashmir, two in Himachal Pradesh and six elsewhere". Cleverly slurring over the fact the "elsewhere" in the statement was... With a membership of over one lakh in state's schools and colleges, the AISSF has hit the extremists their only semblance of base which was demonstrated with effect as students went about burning and they organised a state-wide strike against the alleged burning of the Gurudwara in Churu, Rajasthan, last night. Launched by Sarup Singh in 1944, the

AISSF has had illustrious presidents including the eminent psychiatrist Dr Jaswant Singh Neki and the Delhi Akali leader Jaswant Singh Phul and has generally been considered the more extreme wing of the Akali Dal. As a matter of routine, it has held student training camps with "traditional weapons." for nearly four decades and its present leaders assert that the camps in Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab which are now being talked about were of the same variety. Says its current President Amrik Singh, wanted by the police in a number of cases and a *dharambhai* of Bhindranwale: "Do we really have to train people to use firearms?"

Every Sikh knows that. It is just that the federation members in Jammu & Kashmir were asking for camps for a long time." Amrik Singh, incidentally, is the son of Sant Kartar Singh Bhindranwale who presided over the Damdami Taksal before Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

Arms Build-up: Most of the federation leaders are on the police wanted list and include Satinderjit Singh, alias "PT", the chief of the Amritsar city unit of the federation who has been specifically implicated in connection with several bank robberies, and he promises to fight to the finish in case the police invade the gurudwara. Says Amrik

dumbfounded... keep piling up in front of him (the currency they bring goes promptly into the long pockets of his flowing robe). "I hope you do not smoke," he asked me before giving me my first apple, and checked by taking a deep breath as I extended my palm.

Reporting Bhindranwale also means interpreting his characteristic, rustic humour and homespun homilies. For example, he would often react to promises from the Government saying: *mare te mukre da koi ilaj hai?* (is there any cure for the dead or the dishonest?).

Unusual Mood: But on that Monday evening last fortnight, the terrace was not to be his platform and the fans from the villages were to be deprived of yet another demonstration of how their saint reduced correspondents to dumb morons. Waving aside an armed bodyguard who tried to put me off saying it was prayer time, Bhindranwale took me by surprise, gesturing me to go down the staircase. "Come into my room," he said, and shut the door. In spite of the routine embraces this was going to be my closest audience with the man hated and feared by so many outside Punjab and now armed, in addition to the usual kirpan, with a brand-new .38 automatic.

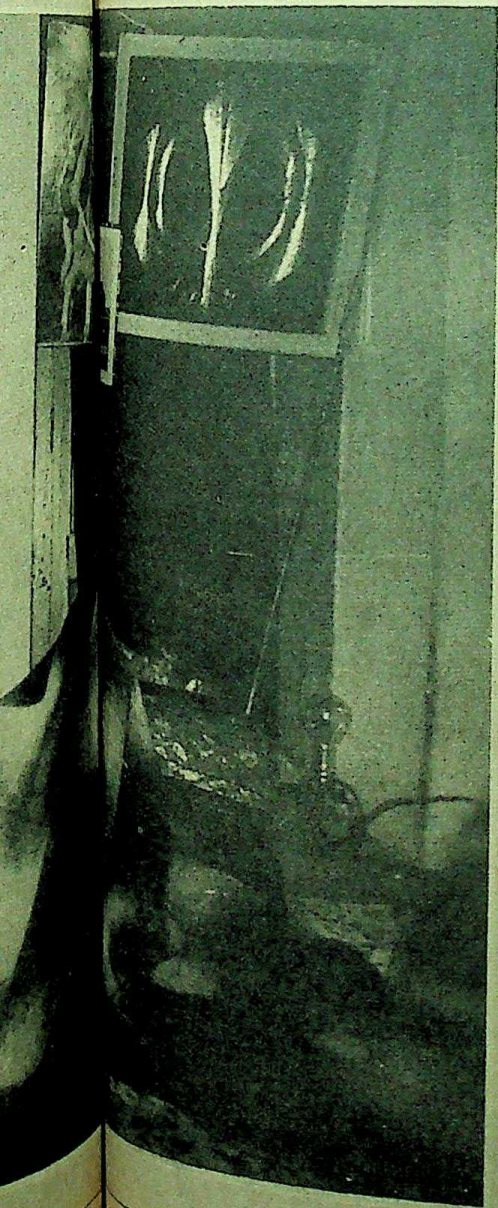
For once, the usual bluster seemed to have been replaced with guarded self-defence. For a man condemned by the country's Parliament with near-unanimity for two full days, stalked by assassins and wanted by the police who are under increasing pressure to arrest him, Bhindranwale still tried to appear nonchalant. But his worry showed. "You have come to me, like other newsmen. You all curse and abuse me in your papers. Have I ever fought with you? Haven't I always called you my younger brother? Don't I always embrace you, make you sit where I do?" He went on: "Had I been an evil person would I have been so friendly? All of you who come to me find me such a nice person and yet write I am getting people killed. Why don't you tell the world that I am not that sort of person. Say that I give respect to everyone."

Defensive Posture: He continued vehemently: "Parliament is agitated by what I said last week. The ruling party,

the Opposition, they all condemned me. But did anyone take note of the fact that I had only reacted to the threat to the Sikhs in Rajasthan by the Jai Hindu Sangh? I challenge you, examine all my statements. Each one has been in reaction to what someone else said first. Someone else brandishes a lathi, and just because we try to shield ourselves we are held guilty." I argued that the Jai Hindu Sangh was an inconsequential body. But he wasn't impressed. He retorted: "That is the game. A Hindu does something and you dismiss him as a petty criminal or communal fanatic. A Sikh does something and you malign the whole community."

Repeatedly, painstakingly, the same Bhindranwale who, till a fortnight ago, spoke to newsmen in a devil-may-care vein, emphasised his claim that all the threats he ever made to the Hindus were under provocation. "I know I am not a nobody. Anything I say has great significance. It is reported all over the world. That is why I always know what I am saying." The same Bhindranwale who always cryptically said he was neither pro- nor anti-Khalistan now asserts: "The Sikhs will not leave India unless the poor fellows are forced out. Why should they leave when they made more sacrifice than all the others for freeing this land?"

But his bluster returned the moment I asked him about the Government's threat of action against him. "Will you surrender in case a warrant is issued against you?" He lashed back, visibly angered: "This time I will not say anything. Let them come with the warrant and then I will give my reply. Let them raid the Guru Nanak Niwas. We are not hiding here wearing bangles." But even this belated expression of self-confidence failed to conceal the fact that he is today a deeply worried man, just as his effort to project a nice-guy image falls decidedly short of being convincing.



Singh: "Delhi likes Sikhs like Zail Singh and Buta Singh who pay court to the Government. All other Sikhs are called extremists. We don't want secession but seek status of first-class citizens." He, too, sports a new, heavy-duty pistol, but asks: "Why is everyone so worried about our weapons. Why is the Government being so soft on (Dhirendra Bhramachari) who was caught with 500 rifles in Jammu? I am sure these were not meant to be used for preaching Gandhism. A gun is after all a gun."

Yet it happens that the kind of guns that the federationists and the other groups in the temple complex have are of a more formidable variety than the kinds the Swami brought in from Spain. According to intelligence estimates, there are at present at least two light

While all kinds of theories are being discussed in intelligence circles the most plausible seems to be that these are a part of the weapons seized by the Israelis from the PLO. Part of this cache was given by Israel to Zaire after Zaire recognised Israel. A large chunk was later transferred to Pakistan for onward delivery to the Afghan Mujahideen. Through smuggling or with the complicity of the Pakistani authorities, some of these have found their way into Punjab.

The grenades have a different story altogether. The extremists have plenty of both Indian and Pakistani origin. Intelligence agencies have evidence of a lot of Pakistani army officers exchanging grenades with smugglers for popular brands of Indian liquor, given the strict *shariat* restrictions in



Bhai Amrik Singh (extreme right), Satinderjit Singh (with gun) in the Guru Nanak Niwas

machine-guns, half a dozen automatic rifles and innumerable telescopic rifles, carbines and Sten-guns with the extremist groups inside the gurudwara complex and though not all of these have come from Pakistan, there is a definite Pakistani connection in the gun-running racket to the temple which has brought smugglers huge profits. Barely three weeks ago a well-known smuggler held a veritable exhibition of sophisticated weapons with price-tags inside Guru Ram Dass Serai. Only, Longowal aborted his sales plans by asking him to pack up.

For the security agencies keeping tabs on the extremists the most striking discovery was the appearance of the AK-47 (Kalashnikov) rifles on the Guru Nanak Niwas terrace. The Kalashnikov is the favourite weapon among left-of-centre extremists around the world and that is why it was even more surprising for the fundamentalist Sikh extremists to have them.

Pakistan. In the Indian Army grenade pilferage is known to be rather common. Explained a BSF officer: "During exercises, all you have to show to prove that you used your grenade is the pin that you remove while throwing it. The old trick is to keep the lever pressed; tie it with a piece of cloth and bring it back with you." This sounds logical because the would-be assassin who tried to lob a grenade at Darbara Singh last year was caught by policemen just as he was unwrapping a strip of cloth from the grenade which did not have the regular pin. The Defence Ministry is now trying to plug this loophole.

Police officers, however, say that the Government has been exaggerating the aspect of arms supplies. Said an officer in Amritsar: "The major problem is the committed extremist, not the weapon." In the border districts of Punjab, often called the "wild west" of the country, even ordinary villagers are crazy about weapons. The state

has a staggering 2.42 lakh licensed weapons. Says P.S. Bhindar, IGP law and order, who would hazard a guess on the number of unlicensed ones. For all I know there may be ten times as many."

Poor Advisors: In the face of this formidable array of men and weapons, the advisers in political and administrative circles feel the Centre has not yet been able to formulate a solid, long-term strategy. Says a senior officer in Chandigarh: "The problem is that Mrs Gandhi is not being advised by people with their ears to the ground. What do P.C. Alexander and N. N. Nayar (special secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs) know about Punjab. And then there is Sethi making a laughing stock of the Government almost every day."

In Delhi, Mrs Gandhi was still struggling to form some kind of a brains trust in Punjab. Home Secretary T.N. Chatterjee, who was the chief commissioner of Chandigarh during the days of the Badla Government in Punjab is the only bureaucrat with some knowledge of the situation. The problem has been complicated by the well-known differences of opinion between her and President Zail Singh who has been softer towards the Akalis for he knows they can be easily manipulated with a bit of political enterprise.

In the present situation, his would be the more mature point of view. For a decision to invade the gurudwara without an agreement with the Akali leadership or at least their just demands will mean not a short of disaster. "I hope to god the Government does not do it. It will mean laying the foundations of Khalistan," said a senior non-Sikh bureaucrat in Chandigarh.

But instead of that, indications are that Mrs Gandhi's policy was based on attrition and hope that in the course of the rival extremist factions would eventually clash violently, giving her an excuse to send the police to "restore order" and do a bit of Amritsar. But given the present balance that seems rather optimistic as no Sikh group would like to do anything now that they are in the charge of sabotaging the moribund Akali leader: "Our faction fights more the game of *gutka*" (the war dance) which Nihangs weave patterns with the words in the air without touching each other.

The Akali leadership is commencing intensifying the agitation on January 20, also the date when Balbir Singh Sodhi threatens to release the "Khalistan" situation. Thus, for the Government still ticking away. The best course still seems to be to wean away the moderates from the extremists. It will be an unmitigated tragedy instead of isolating the extremists, the Government decided to take on the whole community. —SHEKHAR GUPTA in Amritsar

licensed weapons and order on the number know there was the face of this weapons administrative been able to strategy. "The prob being advised their ears to Alexander and Ministry of the ab. And there ghing stock of y day." hi was still of a brains tra T.N. Chatter Commissioner of the of the Bada e only bureau the situation. plicated by f opinion bea gh who has d. kalis for he im ulated with a on, his would it of view, for dwara without i leadership will mean not to god the Gop ill mean layi n," said a se Chandigarh. indications cy was base the course of s would incre an excuse to r" and do a S e present bui ic as no Sikh g now that bri g the morcha ction fights (the war dan tterns with the ching each o p is commo on January 26 bir Singh Sa "Khalistan" o government. ourse still seer erates from the nitigated trag extremists, the on the whole R GUPTA in A



"Excitement. Isn't it always gilt-edged?" he asked.

He said he'd been admiring her taste.

"In escorts?" she asked lightly.

Modestly he shrugged it off.

He was referring to the delicate little beauty she wore on her wrist.

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"It's a watch worth watching" said he.

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"Irresistible" he agreed.

"Though of course" he continued, "when we're together I'd rather you felt that time stood still."

"Time" she said loftily, "is of the essence."

"So it is" he agreed.

Then he picked up her hand just to watch time go by.

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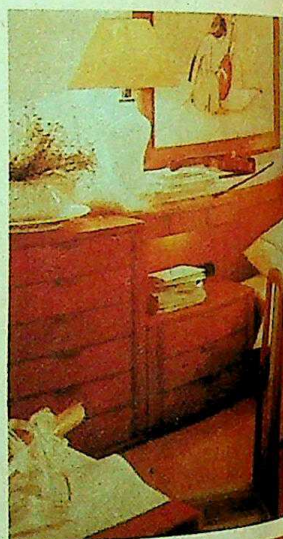
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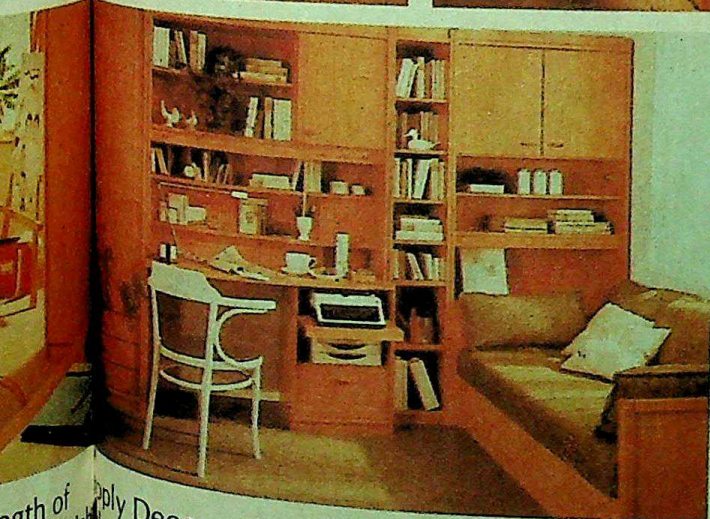
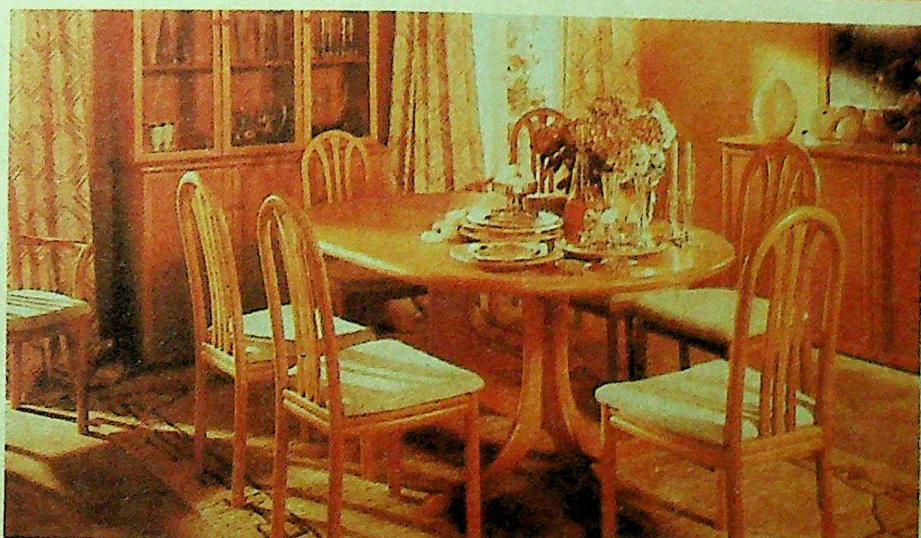
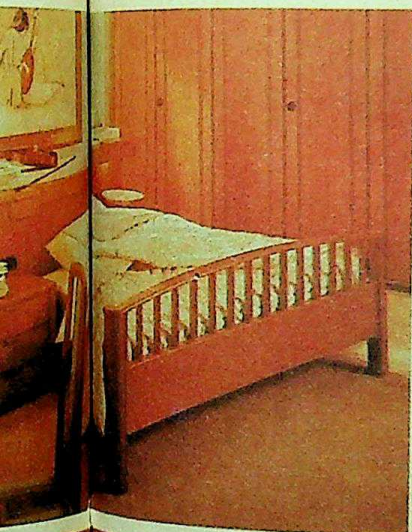
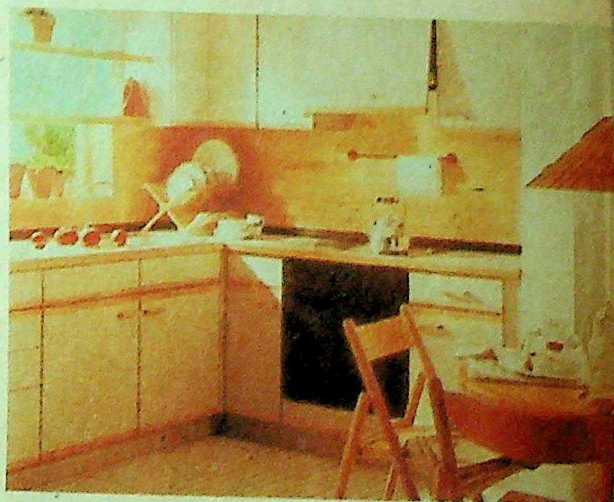
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The East-West Fest

JAZZ BUFFS talk increasingly of Indo-jazz fusion, the intermingling of classical Indian music with modern Western jazz sounds, but never was this "fusion" more apparent than at last month's Jazzfest in Berlin. One of the oldest and most prestigious jazz festivals in the world today, though there are some like New York's Kool Jazz Festival and the North Sea festival, The Jazz League, which are larger—the four-day Jazzfest this year played host to a string of classical Indian musicians and jazz percussionists representing a wide range of musical styles and gharanas.

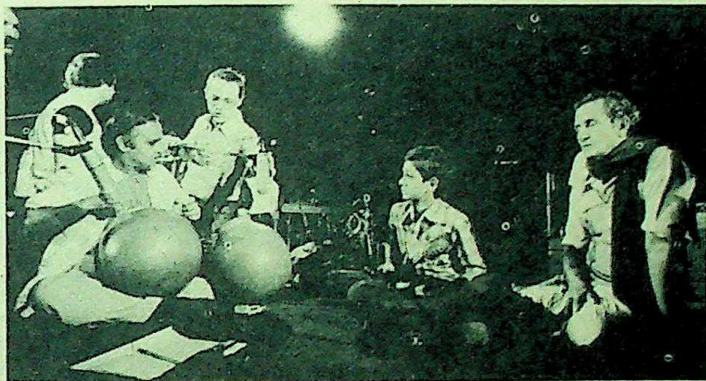
Paying a rare tribute to the country's musicians, the Jazzfest committee arranged to give Berlin audiences at least one Indian act on each day of the festival. Sandwiched between ragtime giants like Miles Davis and the Dixie Roach double quartet and gospel greats like The Barret Sisters and Bobby McFerrin, the Indian contingent nevertheless took the heads and hearts of European audiences packing the 100-seat Berlin Philharmonic. Included among the Indian artistes at the Festival were *Heat and Dust* and tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, classical santoorist Shivkumar Sharma, mandolin prodigy U. Srinivas, and Louis Banks' well-known jazz band Sangam.

Exulted Jazzfest Director George Kintz, a leading jazz pianist and composer: "Many people talk of Indo-jazz fusion, but a lot of this fusion is fake. The jazz audiences here have heard very little authentic Indian music. Hence I was keen that in this festival they should hear both north and south Indian traditional music as well as some of the contemporary Indian jazz performers like the group Sangam. And I must say every one of your groups has performed tremendously well. Shivkumar and Zakir were great, and so was Kadri Gopalnath with his group; that kid Srinivas is incredible—he's a genius; and Sangam, especially Rama Mani, they were just wonderful."

Spellbound Audiences: From the opening performance by santoor maestro Shivkumar Sharma, accompanied by the ever-popular tabla wizard Zakir Hussain, India's musical masters held their Western audiences spellbound. Veterans at the art of presenting traditional Indian concerts to the West, the duo launched into a brilliant rendering of raga *Jhinjhoti* building up from a *alap* to a climax which aroused a thun-

dering applause. The second Indian act of the festival was an interesting fusion effort by Carnatic saxophonist Kadri Gopalnath and his special guest for the performance—American alto-saxophonist John Handy.

Accompanied by T.V. Gopalkrishnan on the mridangam, T.V. Vasant's taval and ghatam—traditional percussion instruments—and T.V. Ramani on the violin, Gopalnath was both emotionally and melodically impressive in his rendition of classical Carnatic music on an instrument designed solely for jazz. The first musician to adapt the saxophone to Carnatic music, Gopalnath is a gifted player who learned his basics from Gopalkrishnan before working out the



(From left) Vinayakram, Srinivas, and Subbaraju: highly popular

improvisations on the instrument. But in dexterity and technical brilliance in getting the most from the saxophone, it was clearly Handy who outshone his Indian partner.

Other Indian artistes at the Jazzfest included budding child star of the mandolin, U. Srinivas. And on the last day, the country's best-known fusion band, Sangam led by jazz pianist Louis Banks, whose continental tours and jazz album *City Life* had by last year made him familiar to European jazz buffs. Including the Karnataka College of Percussion (KCP) and special guest Charlie Mariano on the saxophone, Sangam belted into vibrant jazz compositions based largely on classical Indian ragas. A highlight of the performance was provided by Rama Mani, who along with her husband T.A.S. Mani runs KCP—the country's best-organised school for classical south Indian music. A brilliant vocalist whose joint album with Mariano is already well-known in Germany, Rama captivated the audience with her interpretation of Banks' complicated compositions. Exclaimed American devotional singer Bobby McFerrin: "Wow, such singing. I have not heard much of Indian music, but I feel emotionally close to it."

But the show was really stolen by 13-year-old boy wonder, U. Srinivas, whose performance on the penultimate day earned thunderous applause and perhaps more notice backstage than any other act. "He's got it in him. He's fantastic," raved Don Cherry, a great jazz trumpeter who has studied Indian music under the Dagar brothers in Bombay. Added guitarist John Scofield, whose performance in the Miles Davis Band immediately before Srinivas was widely appreciated: "That kid's great."

Srinivas' virtuoso handling of the mandolin was even more remarkable considering his placement in the festival: pitted against Miles Davis and his All-Star band, the young prodigy was billed to perform under high-pressure conditions on his first exposure to foreign audiences. Miles Davis fans had paid as much as Rs 1,200 per ticket on the black market and demand ran so high that the organisers finally consented to a repeat concert.

A natural prodigy who learnt to play the mandolin before he was six and began his formal training in Carnatic music at that age, Srinivas was not fazed in the slightest by either the crowd or the television cameras, which beamed his second performance into homes across the country. Exuding amazing confidence from the opening notes of raga *Hamsadhwani*, Srinivas displayed a maturity in his choice of notes and phrasing, his sense of sur and laya and his virtuosity over the "little instrument" set the large auditorium humming with pleasure. Although he did not have his entire complement of rhythm backing, Srinivas was egged on by T.H. Vinayakram on the ghatam and the presence on stage of his guru, R. Subbaraju.

Musical Fusion: The festival has been equally rewarding for the other Indian musicians who performed at Berlin. It is the first really serious effort to bring together a broadly representative group of Indian masters and their Western contemporaries, helping consolidate a trend of musical fusion restricted in the past to individual efforts.

American saxophonist Charlie Mariano will begin an all-India tour next January, and four months later Srinivas will visit Europe. Tours are in the offing for Banks and members of the KCP too, since Sangam has been invited to the Helsinki Jazz Festival next September. And in March John McLaughlin of the Indo-British jazz band Shakti, will arrive in India on a tour timed to coincide with the Jazz Yatra in Bombay. All indications were that Indo-western jazz interaction had come to stay.

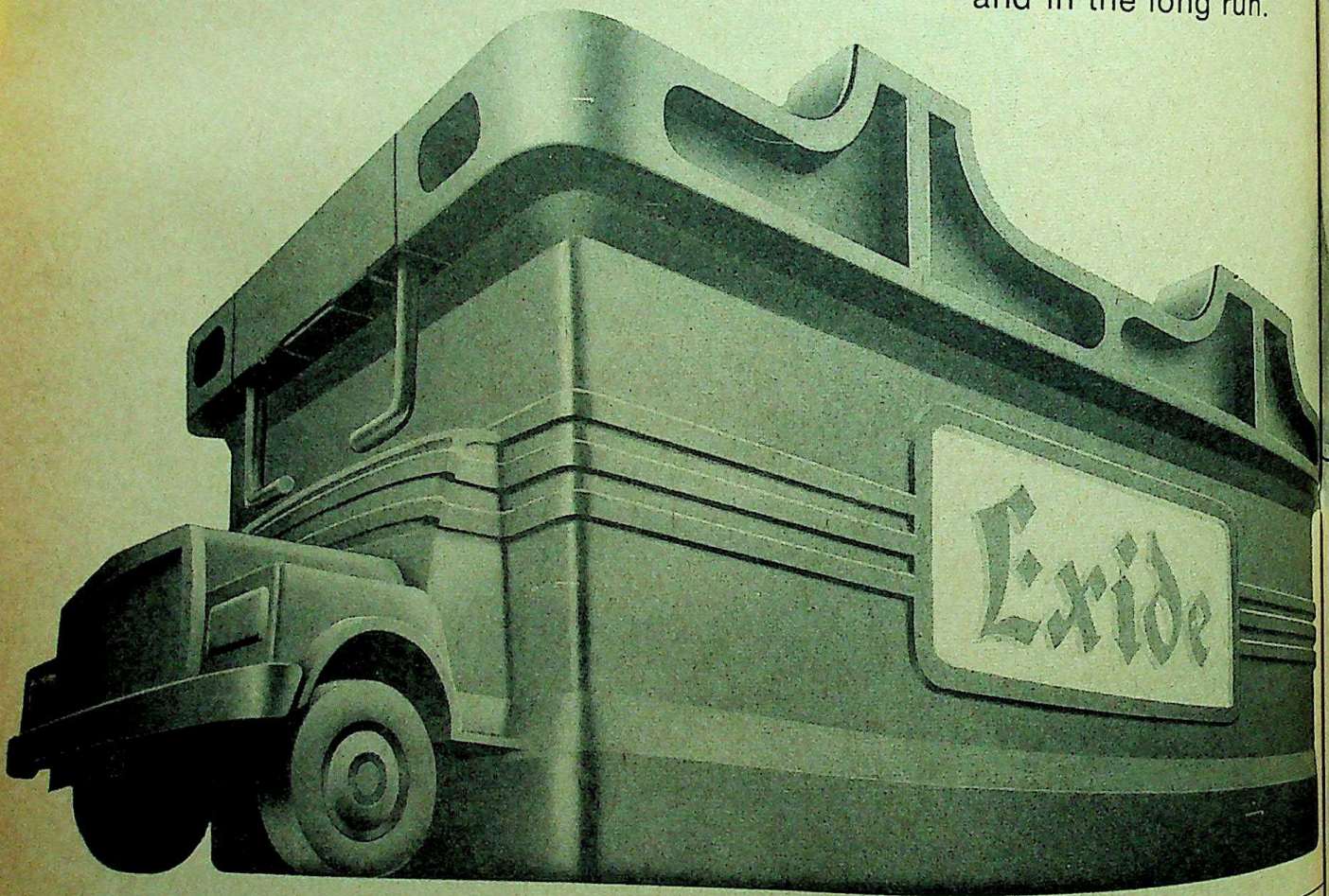
—CHANDER UDAY SINGH with
YUSUF GANDHI in Berlin

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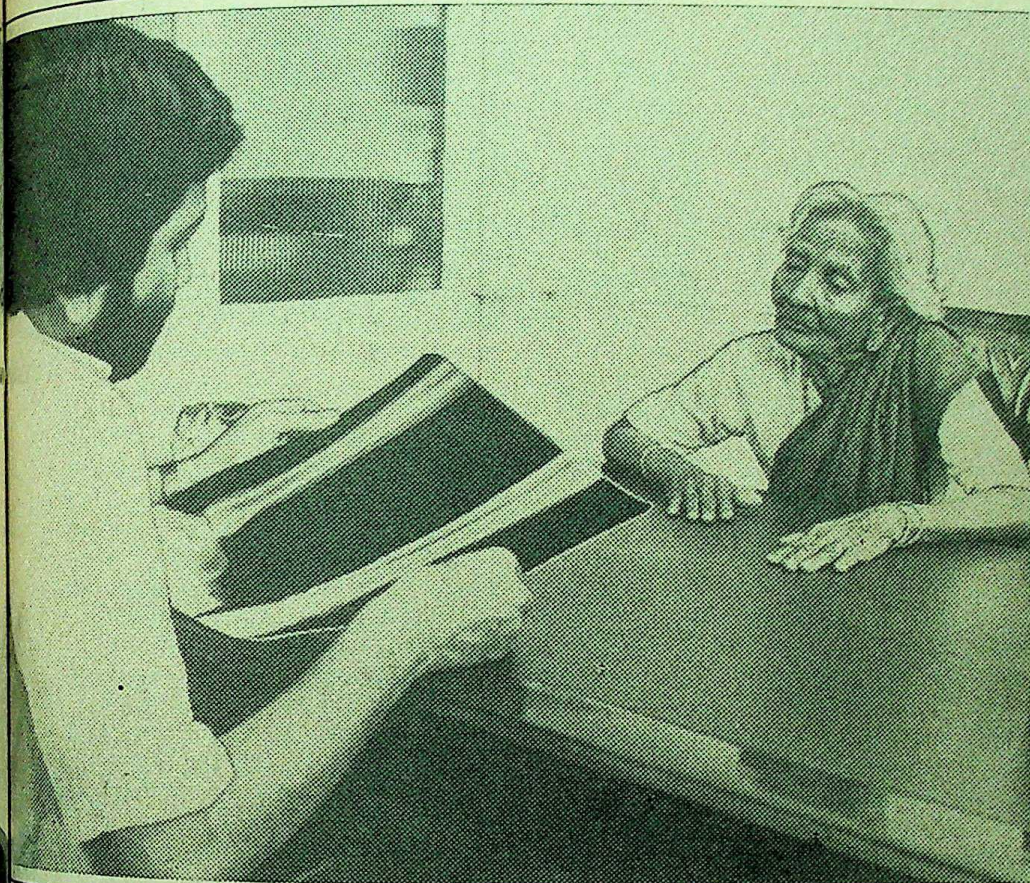


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UNITED STATES

After The Day After



IT WAS American democracy at its very best. It was an event coming for days and weeks. It put the entire American nation on alert. Not only the Reagan Administration but the entire nuclear weapons military and strategic affairs establishment, giant in size and massive in resource and power, was put on the defensive. An extraordinary array of pressure force was assembled to prevent the event from coming or to radically diminish its impact. But the pressures did not work—neither from the Government nor from the strategic establishment nor even big business.

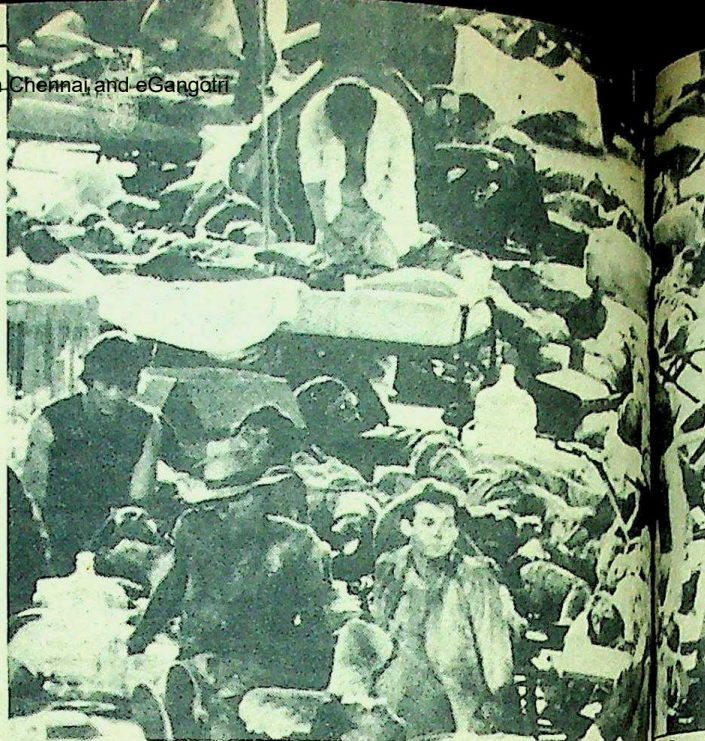
After more than a year's making and several months of dauntless struggle against pressures of many kinds the ABC television network showed at prime time on a Sunday last month, a two-hour film entitled *The Day After*. It was watched by one hundred million people. After weeks of intense debates, millions of Americans gathered in churches, college lecture halls, community centres and living-rooms to watch with their own eyes, what happened to an entire city, after it was attacked by medium-sized thermonuclear bombs.

It was much more than a television film. It was a political testament. It was an atom bomb dropped by the mass media of a democratic nation on its, and the world's nuclear establishments. Nuclear war was no longer a matter of experts and specialists. It was no longer an exercise in statistics of terror conducted in a vocabulary that conveyed little meaning to the ordinary people. It was nuclear war come true and alive to millions of people who have been living in a world perilously perched on a mountain of nuclear bombs capable of wiping out civilised life several times over. No longer will the nuclear debate be what it remained for nearly 40 years. No longer will it be possible to plan for "limited" or "local" or "winnable" nuclear war while lulling the American people to a false belief that nuclear war would never happen or in any case would not happen to America.

Horrible Truths: A television network has bought home to the Americans what will happen to their cities, their country and themselves when even a few nuclear weapons are dropped. The mushroom cloud is no longer the faded history of distant Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is now a part of American reality. At the end of the film, a voice pierces the grim silent void with an anguished question: "Is anybody there?" the question is repeated in even greater anguish. And then the voice answers itself with a helpless whisper, "there's no one there." No American who watched the film will ever be able to forget that wail of whisper.

Weeks before the showing of the film, the Administration as well as the numerous advocates of the nuclear arms race thought doggedly to pre-empt the impact of the movie. There were nation-wide discussions on whether children should be permitted to watch it. The establishment tried its best to convince Americans that the film was nothing but a clever instrument used by the anti-nuclear movement to whip up the emotions and passions of the people against the Reagan Administration's arms build up programme.

This however only rallied an extraordinary coalition of interests and groups not only in favour of showing the film but for galvanising its impact to educate Americans on the unfathomable peril of nuclear war. In schools from coast to coast, teachers prepared kids for watching the film. Priests used it for sermons. Columnists and television commentators joined in the debate with a passion and an intensity that cannot be imagined by Indians. Overwhelmingly they came out in favour of all Americans watching the film, except very small children. Professional bodies like the Association of Children's Doctors



Survivors of the nuclear holocaust

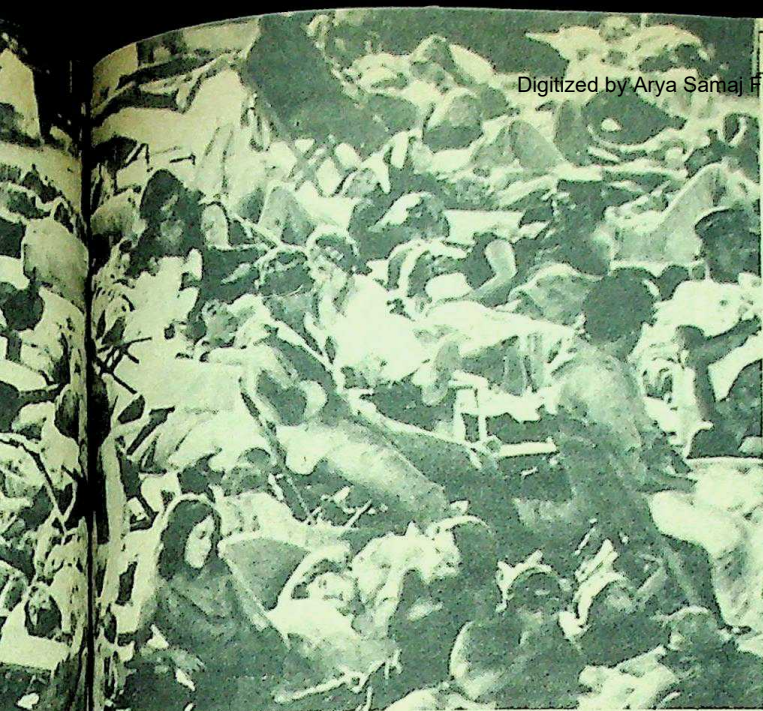
and even the American Medical Association offered expert counsel on how parents should help their children understand the message of the film. ABC which was doubtful of the film's success even a few weeks before it was shown and was prepared to run it at a financial loss was overwhelmed by the listener response it actually received and was able to more than cover the production costs.

Negative Attitudes: For four years the Reagan Administration not only went on modernising its nuclear arsenal and coaxing Congress to sanction funds for several new weapons systems, but a strong vocal lobby grew in America openly talking and writing about "limited" or "local" nuclear wars which could be "won". With the passing year the barrier between nuclear and conventional warfare got increasingly blurred with the result that the next conventional war can hardly be fought without tactical or theatre nuclear weapons especially if the super powers are involved.

The Reagan Administration took a dangerously negative attitude towards arms control and adopted a permissive posture regarding nuclear proliferation by regimes allied to the United States. These cynical policy decisions, together with a series of accidents at nuclear power plants, have finally aroused the American people to the reality of nuclear war. The American mass media have played a major role in this gigantic mass awakening that will shine as an inspiring example of what a free press can do in a democracy to expose every all-powerful evil. Never before has television served like this as a rallying force anywhere in the world.

The film could not drive into the American mind its stern political statement if it were not a powerful television drama. It went beyond all descriptive prose. In its first 50 minutes, the film introduces the audience to the sunbathed city of Kansas, in the mid-West, a state of the same name and its neighbouring university town of Lawrence. Men, women and children are busy with normal daily chores. The easy rhythm of life is somewhat but not unduly disturbed by the news of a war breaking out in Europe with East German troops marching into West Germany. The US President declares a state of alert and there is suspense and fear of war, some people are talking casually of nuclear war, and a woman telling her husband and children that it could never happen to America.

Suddenly everything changes in four minutes of terrifying intensity. The bombs fall. There is a white light over Lawrence and a blinding yellow light. There are the mushroom clouds devouring the sky with their flames, followed by fire storms and winds. Buildings explode and implode. A poplar forest bends. A moment of terror turns into images of skeletons on an X-ray film. A moment of



The Day After: stern political warning

Jason Richards, who survives the blast, says it looked "like the exploded".

FOR THE next 70 minutes the film is an endless depiction of radiation poisoning. What used to be a boom city, a towering symbol of industrial civilisation, is a tangled mess of debris, dust and dust. The lights are out seemingly for ever. There is no water. People become blind. Their hair fall off. The wounds on their faces and arms grow larger, uglier and angrier. Their complexions turn sallow. The farm land is covered with contaminated ash. There will be no crops for many years. Infants are and will be born deformed. Medicine cannot cure. Life has either ceased to exist or has been arrested. The world has frozen in the nuclear winter. The continuity of the species has been lost.

Near the end of *The Day After* there is a printed message, white on black background, which says, "It is to be hoped that the images of this film will inspire the nations of this earth, their people and leaders to find the means to avert the fateful day." The morning after the film was shown, the Union of Concerned Scientists, a powerful and increasingly effective organisation of one lakh scientists and dedicated citizens including 46 American Nobel laureates, said in a full-page statement in *The New York Times*: "*The Day After* is only a TV show. You and your family are still alive. You can go to bed before—silent, complacent, as the world drifts another day toward the possibility of nuclear war. But in case you lost some sleep tonight, in case you woke up to the realisation that you must do something to help prevent nuclear war..." what followed was an appeal for supportive funds and action, and the response much to their surprise was instant and enormous.

Defending Policy: The film put the Reagan Administration and nuclear weapons and deterrent elite entirely on the defensive. The showing of the film was followed by a two-hour discussion in Washington between members of a powerful panel in the presence of Americans. First the ABC moderator of the programme interviewed Secretary of State George Shultz, at his house. In a voice shaken and well known for its penchant for "limited winnable" nuclear war, the film "dramatises the unacceptability" of nuclear war, and immediately went on to depict Reagan as an earnest and sincere seeker of nuclear arms control and peace. He asked the people to support Reagan's arms control policy and used the film to silence the extreme right for criticising Reagan for offering any arms control proposal to the Soviets at all.

Members of the panel included different shades of views. William Buckley Jr editor of the conservative weekly *National Review*, sharply attacked the film as part of a "deliberate" effort to "deliberate the US" and undermine support for the Administration's policies. Henry Kissinger, looking over-burdened with the cares and troubles of a world he cannot shape into order any more, dubbed the film as a "simple minded notion of the nuclear problem". Asked Kissinger: "Are we supposed to make policy by scaring ourselves to death?" He went on to add: "To demonstrate by an orgy of pictures what has been known for three decades does not contribute to solving the problem."

Robert McNamara, former defence secretary, on the other hand warmly welcomed the film and saw it as a major contribution towards creating public awareness of the dangers of nuclear war, and chided the Administration for doing too little too late to bring nuclear weapons under stable control. Amongst the audience present, all but one young lady asked questions that mirrored the ordinary American's deepening concern about the real and horrifying possibility of a nuclear holocaust.

Portraying Reality: *The Day After* actually played down and sanitised the mind-boggling impact of nuclear war. The real thing will be "worse, much worse," scientists told newsmen after watching the film. Even limited nuclear strikes against a few cities involving perhaps as few as a 100, one-megaton bombs, less than one per cent of the planet's nuclear arsenal, would set in motion global changes far more hostile to life than previously anticipated. Clouds of soot and smoke would plunge the earth into a winter so bitter and a darkness so extensive that the day after might not arrive for months, according to scientists interviewed by *The New York Times*. A nuclear war would stop or impair photosynthesis in plants for months and possibly for as long as a year or more. And as for the people who survive heat blast, radiation and fall-out, they might freeze or starve to death.

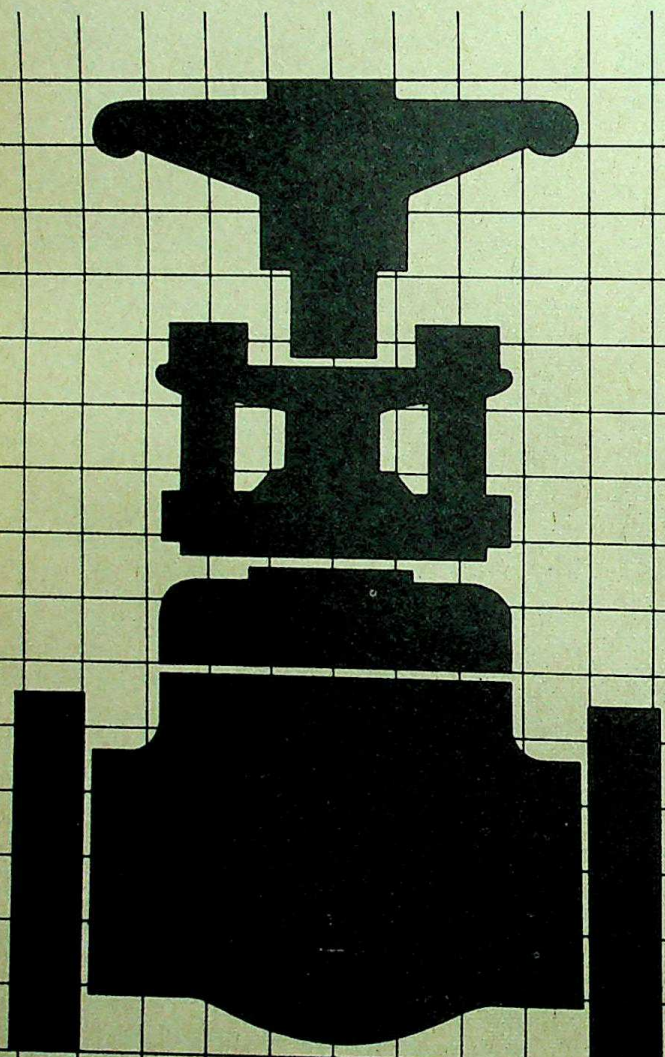
Recently a group of 600 American and other scientists met in Washington DC to discuss long-term, world-wide consequences of nuclear war. They said that living things would be threatened by ultraviolet radiation when the sun finally peeked through clouds of soot, dust and smoke. This searing sight depicted in *The Day After*, can hinder the growth of crops, and in humans it can suppress the immune system and cause blindness. The scientists said that the ultimate result of a large-scale nuclear war would be the extinction of a significant portion of the earth's animals and plants. In the northern hemisphere there might be no human survivors, while in south all that might remain would be small bands of hunters and gatherers, struggling for their survival.

The Day After will no doubt reinforce the anti-nuclear movement in the United States. If the film is shown in Western Europe and the Soviet Union, it will add momentum to a world-wide movement against nuclear weapons. This is the one ray of hope in a world which strategic experts are daily pushing toward the brink of a nuclear armagedon.

America was the first power to make nuclear weapons. It has been the first and only power to have used nuclear weapons in war. America may now turn out to be the first nation to generate a truly powerful and effective peoples movement against nuclear war and compel the US Government to move clearly and definitely towards prevention of nuclear war.

American democracy is a great storehouse of strength of men and women against powerful man-made but man-dwarfing institutions including governments and giant war machines. Two American war heroes, General Douglas MacArthur and Dwight Eisenhower remarked that people rather than governments, must one day seize the initiative to prevent war. If Americans have begun to move on that road they deserve the hug and hoorah of people everywhere.

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A Deadly Addiction

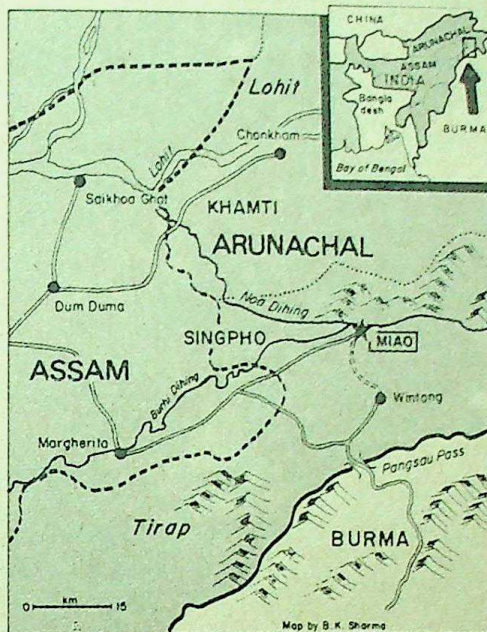
THE JUNGLE track that branches off to the right of the metalled road leading to Miao, the tiny subdivisional headquarters in Tirap, the easternmost district of the obscure Union territory of Arunachal Pradesh, ends abruptly in a gurgling mountain stream. And another kilometre of bridge through the mud leads to what seems to be the end of the world—a small tribal village called Namphai, bang on the border with Burma.

In his imposing, 30m-long bamboo hut, Ninguonu, the village chief, lies desolately in a dark corner. His eyes peer prominently from high cheek-bones made even more striking by the hollows beneath them. By his side lie drugs of all kinds—antibiotics, pain-killers, vitamins and anti-diarrhoeals. The chief speaks haltingly, often crying out in pain and taking a puff at his exotic-smoking hookah.

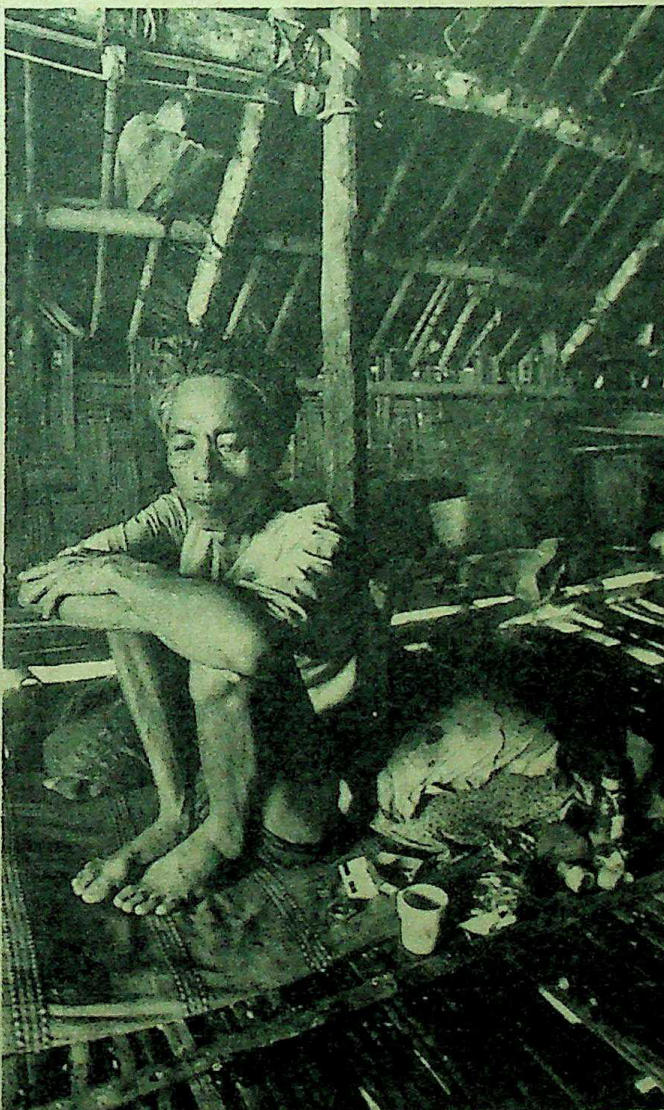
Ninguonu Singpho is dying of a plethora of illnesses. Sadly, he symbolises his tribe, for the Singphos are declining in number at the rate of 2 percent every year. And there is little hope for them unless they fall in line with an ambitious scheme worked out by the Government which they are still resisting, as it means having to give up ancestral homesteads and moving to other areas where they can be protected.

Dying Tribe: From 40,000 about 150 years ago, the Singphos were counted at 1,168 in the 1971 census and are now 923, according to the Arunachal Pradesh Research Department. Recurrent wars, disease, malnutrition and, most tellingly, a century and a half of opium addiction have taken their toll. Along with the custom of marriage between first cousins, opium has diminished the tribe's fertility, increased the death rate and contributed to the vicious cycle of poverty and malnutrition. Says Parul Dutta, director of research: "Sometime we could count only 923 Singphos. It will not be easy to save this tribe unless we can counter their chronic opium addiction."

In Namphai, as in any other Singpho village, the air reeks of opium. Every house has a small shelf in one of the corners above which hang a blowpipe, a large packet of raw tea leaves, and a packet of tobacco. At any time of



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BHAWAN SINGH



Village chief Ninguonu: resisting change

the day haggard, skinny tribesmen can be seen making the tobacco-opium concoction that they smoke along with generous swigs of the bitter tea liquor. Says Enowla Singpho, a former jawan of the Special Services Bureau and one of a handful of Singphos now leading a campaign of sorts to reform the remaining tribesmen: "This is our bane. You can tell a Singpho by smell. Our people are too indolent to look after their cattle and lands but yet must buy the opium, mostly by selling the elephants they have trapped."

Opium, as anthropologists explain, has become an inseparable part of Singpho life. They have smoked it for decades and it even comes handy for prompt relief even if temporary relief from diarrhoea and other stomach disorders so common in the disease-infested jungles. Singpho folklore is full of tales about opium addiction; says chief Ninguonu, looking hungrily at fellow tribesman Nongpunuo fixing a 'joint' for him: "We are addicted to opium just like our forefathers who were introduced to it by the nasty British. There is no getting away from it now."

Rescue Effort: But that is precisely what the Government wants to do now. In a scheme drafted by the department of research and rehabilitation, the Union territory's Government proposes to shift the surviving Singphos from their isolated, miserly and tiny settlements to one large village near the small town of Bordumsa on the bank of the Noa Dihing bordering the Lohit district. The Government proposes to give each family land sufficient for its survival and financial aid to start meaningful work.

Besides this, plans are being drawn up to wean the tribe away from opium. Said G.C. Bhattacharjee, extra assistance commissioner of Miao: "It is impossible to approach each far-flung hamlet individually now. Also, how can you prevent smuggling and illegal supply of opium all over the hills and the forests? But it will be much easier controlling just one village." Yet, unfortunately, the resistance to the scheme has come from the Singphos themselves who are unfortunately averse to leaving their natural habitat and do not see enough incentive in starting life afresh.

The decline of the Singphos is the saga of a powerful tribe that fell prey to a destructive combination of its own frailties, hazards of its habitat and the deceit of the British who gained control of Assam in the first quarter of the 19th century after a series of battles with the Burmese. As

the officers of the East India Company went about strengthening their hold over the new territory and pacifying the warlike tribes inhabiting the hills they came across one that was intractable, divided though it was among various warring chiefs.

THE SINGPHOS were one tribe the British could not subdue in spite of a series of bloody clashes beginning in 1825 with a raid by over 7,500 Singphos on territories held by tribes loyal to the British. "They are by far the most powerful people bordering the Brahmaputra valley," wrote W. Robinson in his *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, published in 1841. And the harried British soon found a shrewd and natural way of dealing with them.

Towards the second half of the 19th century, as they set about controlling the use of opium in Assam the Singpho country was left untouched. "They are a fine athletic race above the ordinary standard in height, and capable of enduring great fatigue; but their energies are greatly impaired by the use of opium and spirits in which they freely indulge," wrote ethnologist E.T. Dalton three decades after Robinson had first studied the Singphos.

Fatal Addiction: The Singphos, however, believe that the British got their ancestors systematically addicted to opium. "And, probably for this reason their number was dwindling," observe the authors of the official gazetteer of the Tirap district. Says Tapan Kumar Barua, former research officer of the Tirap district and author of a monograph on the Singphos: "Today the average Singpho is not what he used to be a hundred years ago. He is much softened physically with weak constitution and shorter span of life. There is hardly any old man in the whole of the Singpho area."

The Singphos first appeared on the eastern tip of Assam towards the end of the 18th century while the territory was in the grip of a bloody free-for-all following the decline of the Ahom rulers and fratricidal wars between the Ahom royalists following the Shakti cult and the new Vaishnavites called the Moamarias. Starting from their original habitat of Hukawng valley in Burma they made the eastern Patkai hills their new abode, defeated the Khamtis and emerged as the most powerful tribe in the region.

But today, the Singphos, who are closely related to the large Kachin tribe of Burma, are not just the smallest and the fastest dwind-

ling tribe in Arunachal Pradesh: they are also one of the most docile, poor and unhealthy. In the entire village of Namphai there are hardly half-a-dozen able-bodied men.



A Singpho woman outside her hut (top) and a tribal puffs at his opium: diminishing numbers

Says Lokaino, an educated Singpho: "There is no point in your going around looking at all our villages. You will find nothing but Just a few unhealthy old people, lying in corners, waiting for death."

Widespread Poverty: It is the same story in most other villages, barring odd rich one like Pishibasti across the Dihing river which benefited because of the tribesmen seized their opportunity when oil prospecting began in the region. Some, like Pishila Singpho, the village headman, made money out of selling to the government the land they claimed as their own. Some others found odd jobs or gave their phants out on hire. But the benefits have permeated to the whole village. Says Pishila Singpho: "We all waited for our MLA to do something for us. But who takes any trouble for a man representing less than a thousand people?" Under its scheme of giving representation to the minuscule tribes in the Assembly, the Arunachal Pradesh Government has nominated a Singpho to it.

But anthropologists say that is hardly enough. Said Parul Dutta: "What you need is someone to educate them and make them see the benefits of shifting to one large village where the Government could look after them. The basic problem is that the Singphos are not given to permanent cultivation and it is difficult to make them think in terms of resettlement. Asserted an anguished G.C. Bhattacharjee: "It is impossible to implement drastic measures to save them unless the tribesmen themselves become conscious of the need for self-preservation."

Unfortunately, such is the Singpho belief in their myths that hardly any tribesman will accept the fact of their decline. In fact they believe that their traditional marriage between first cousins increases the tribe's fertility. Says Pishila Singpho: "There is no question of our fading away. Our brother Kachins rule Burma and even the Manipuris are our cousins. Strangely enough the belief is shared by most Singphos who insist that the main body of their tribe still survives in Burma."

That is the paradox in today's ethnically charged atmosphere in the North-east, where one group is busy fighting an open violent battle with the factors that seem to threaten its cultural identity. It will be tragic now if the Singphos were to perish for want of the state's intervention.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA



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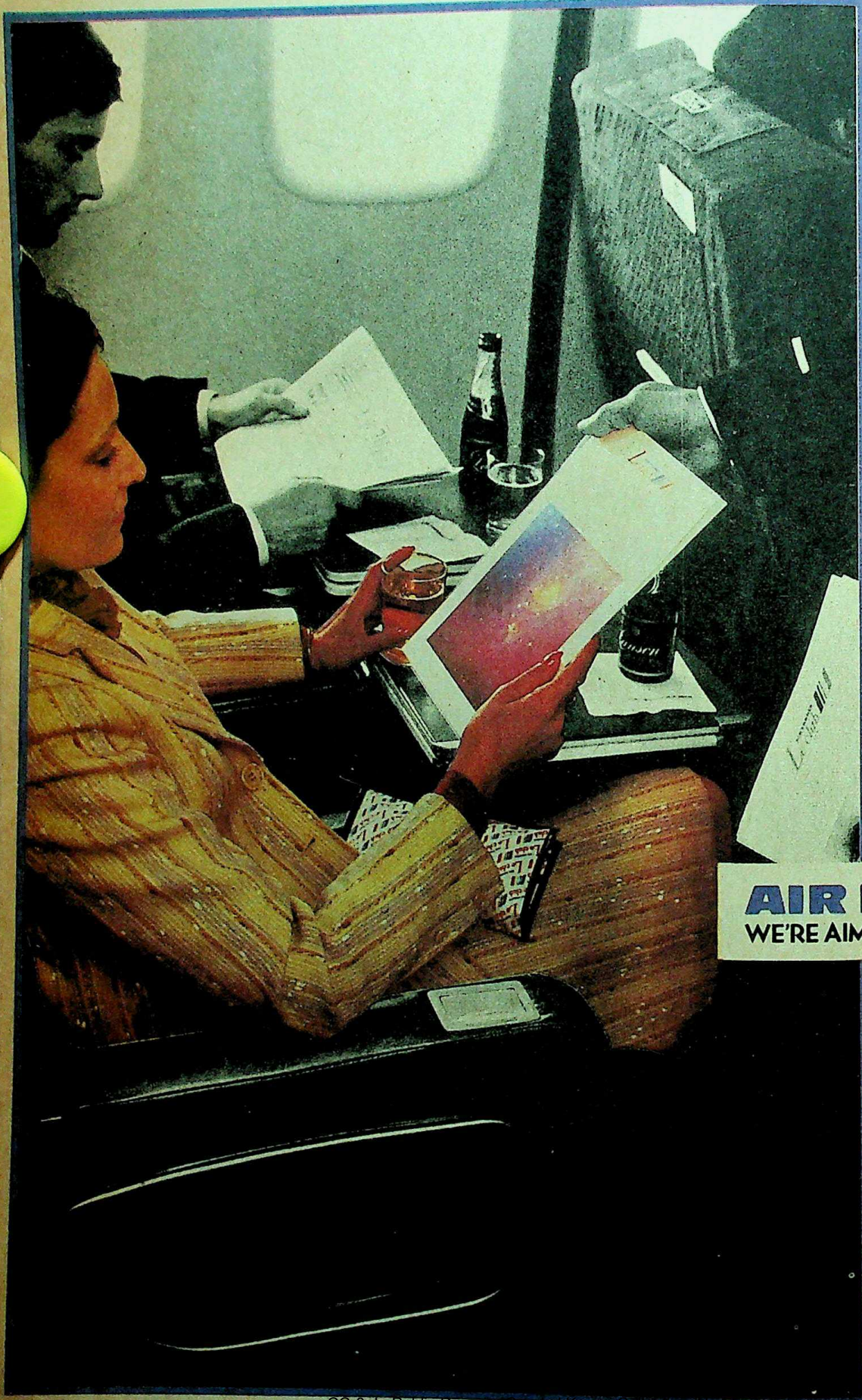
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CHAMPAGNE TIMES

INDIA will soon be making champagne—entirely for export, initially, but perhaps later for the domestic market as well. A Bombay-based company, Champagne India Ltd, has entered into a collaboration agreement with Campagne Technology, France, a subsidiary of Piper Heidsieck, the world's third largest producer of champagne. The plant is being located on the Nasik-Pune highway, where 100 acres of vineyard are being planted with blending stock multiplied from cuttings brought in from the champagne district of France. Domestic grape varieties will form 70 per cent of the blend. Crushing will start next February, with an initial capacity to fill 7.5 lakh bottles, which will later be expanded to 12.5 lakh bottles. Orders have already been booked in Australia and South-east Asia for the full production of the first five years, with an option to extend these orders. The Rs 5.8 crore project will make India the seventh country in the world to produce champagne.

RAID ON RAND

THE TAKE-OVER fever has caught on again, with the Bangurs mounting a raid on the Madras-based Seshasayee Paper and Boards Ltd, and the ever-alert R.P. Goenka launching an attack on the typewriter company Remington Rand. The sector financial institutions hold 40 per cent of Remington's and 30 per cent of Seshasayee's, while a further 28.4 per cent of the latter's equity is held by the Tamil Nadu Government. Undaunted, Goenka tried to grab managerial control by first buying up a shareholding and then trying to win the allegiance of Remington's senior management, which is wholly professional. The Bangurs in turn sent the Seshasayee share price rocketing 40 per cent in four days, from Rs 13.75 to Rs 19.25. For the moment, at least, the bids appear to have been unsuccessful. Seshasayee Managing Director S. Viswanathan says the Bangurs have been warned "by who matter" to keep their hands off, so that the share price dropped back quickly to Rs 16. Remington's equity value, which was in the initial excitement from Rs 15 to Rs 50 in barely a week, has dropped off to Rs 40.75.

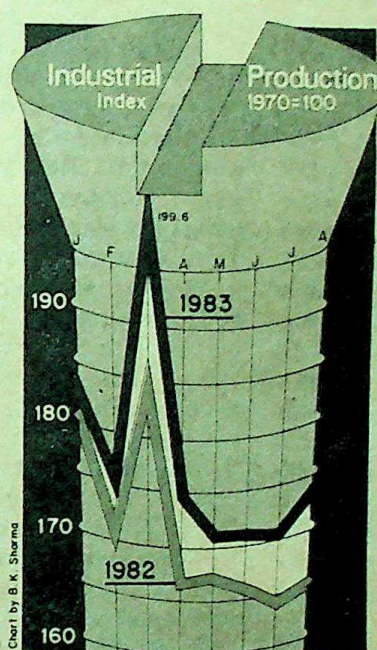
MATCH

THE EXPECTED price war has broken out among TV manufacturers. Reacting rather slowly to the reduction in excise and customs duties on TV sets and electronic components (announced in August), manufacturers are now falling over one another in effort to offer low-price sets. Texla set the ball rolling with a 12 inch black and white set on offer for Rs 1,265 (a 30 per cent drop from earlier prices), Viking followed suit with a 20 inch set at Rs 1,800, and both Uptron and Electronics Corporation Ltd (ECL) made announcements about offering colour sets around Rs 6,000—well below the earlier prices of Rs 8,000. Manufacturers warn that prices will drop further.

S FOR AMETHI

THE PROPOSED Rs 600 crore fertiliser plant in Rajiv Gandhi's constituency, Amethi, is to be set up by a new venture in which Arab shareholding will be 40 per cent—to be held by a Consolidated Company for Industrial Services, which itself is a venture promoted by financiers from half a dozen countries in the Gulf. Of the rest of the shares, 11 per cent will be held by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, and the remaining 49 per cent will be offered to the public. Further foreign shareholding is not, however, ruled out. The project is likely to be set up by the Italian engineering firm Progetti, which has already signed a pre-engineering contract and is offering some financial assistance for the project. This may not, however, include soft aid.

NOT SO INDUSTRIOUS



THIS YEAR promises to be another sub-standard one for industry. Production in the first eight months, till August, shows a rise of just 3.9 per cent, with the manufacturing sub-sector in fact growing by no more than 3.4 per cent. Industrialists in a variety of fields report continued sluggishness in demand, and power supply promises to become an even bigger problem since generation increased by only 2.8 per cent in the eight months till August. Only once in the last seven years has industrial growth touched the targeted 8 per cent (1981, at 9.3 per cent), and the average rate of growth from 1977 on has been no more than 4.5 per cent.

BAD TIMES FOR BHEL

WITH MORE orders for power stations going to foreign companies—the latest in the list is likely to be a 1,000 mw station at Kalgaon in Bihar—the domestic Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) faces the prospect of being able to feed its plants to only half their capacity. Hydel set manufacturing capacity is already surplus—fresh orders this year amount to a grand total of 30 mw, against the annual capacity of 1,250 mw, and the Bhopal plant may consequently be idle after March unless fresh orders come in. Thermal orders are also insufficient—there have been no substantial new orders for 18 months—and company spokesmen talk of going through the Seventh Five-Year Plan period (1985-90) with half the manufacturing capacity unused.

The major reason for this is said to be the bagging of orders by foreign rivals who offer easy credit as bait. The Soviets have got the 1,200 mw Waidhan project and are negotiating for the Kalgaon one as well, the British have got the 1,000 mw Rihand plant and Mitsui of Japan is expected to bag yet another 1,000 mw project at Anpara. Brown Boveri of Switzerland made a strong bid for the 1,000 mw Chandrapur plant, but BHEL has managed to get this opened up to a global tender, for which it intends to bid. On top of this, a shortage of rupee resources has brought about a delay in placing sufficient advance orders for the seventh plan, so that thermal set production is expected to slow down from 1985.

INFLATION

Symptom not the Disease



EVERY time the price index goes up one point—and it does so at a steady clip of a point a week—Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee assures the country that things are really not that bad, and if prices can go up, they can come down also, though there is very little evidence that prices are subject to the implacable laws of gravity. They seem to be operating, at least in India, according to their very own special laws, subject neither to the forces of supply and demand, nor to the painfully laboured exhortations contained in pompous ministerial pronouncements. Continuing its climb for the 20th successive month, the consumer price index touched 500 (1960=100) last month, about the same time Pranab Mukherjee was telling his fellow parliamentarians in Delhi that the worst was over, or nearly so, and with the new harvest in, the back of inflation would be broken.

I am surprised that people should talk about prices as if that was the only thing that was wrong with the country's economy. Inflation is after all a symptom, not the disease, and the ailments that afflict the economy are far worse than a rise—or fall—of a few percentage points in the wholesale or consumer price index every week.

Continuous Stagnation: Why on earth shouldn't prices rise, when nothing else does? The picture of an economy galloping on all fours is a figment of the statisticians' imagination. Take the question of foodgrains, the basic bench-mark by which everything else should be judged, at least in a country where so many people do not know where their next meal is coming from. Everyone in the Government is tossing around the figure of 145 million tonnes of foodgrain output this year, as if it was manna from heaven, which of course it is, but not the kind it is made out to be. The figures speak for themselves. During the eight years ended 1982-83—which was a poor year, but really not all that poor, considering that it was the third best year of the eight-year period—the average production of foodgrains was 123.5 million tonnes a year. If we assume that we shall be blessed this year with a harvest of 145 million tonnes, the average for the nine-year period—a long period that takes care of all possible cycles in weather and other natural phenomena—will go up slightly to 126 million tonnes.

Now, this was precisely the production in 1977-78, that is, six years ago, which means we are back to square one, after all

these years. The picture is thus one of continuous stagnation on the farm front, not just for a couple of years which could have been understandable, or even for five years, but for nine long years. This year's expected bumper harvest doesn't do anything to alter the dismal picture. I fail to see, therefore, why the so-called bumper harvest should make much difference to prices, and I am not the least surprised that it doesn't.

Bleak Scene: Let us look at the food-grain picture a little more closely. There has been no change at all during all these years in the output of rice and pulses which between them account for nearly half the total food-grain output. Rice production in 1975-76 was 48.7 million tonnes; it was 48.6 million tonnes last year (1982-83). The farmers produced pulses to the tune of 13 million tonnes in 1975-76; the figure was down to 12 million tonnes last year. The same is more or less the case with coarse cereals. It is only in the case of wheat that production has gone up, but on all other fronts, the picture is of continuing stagnation.

In industry, things are a little better, but only relatively so. Industrial production has been going up at the rate of 5 per cent a year but there have been years when the pace has been much slower. However, in most consumer industries, the kind of industries that cater to the needs of common people, production has not only been stagnant but, in most cases, declining. Production of cotton cloth was 7,983 million metres in 1981-82; it was 8,091 in 1975-76. There has

The Government thus takes away one-sixth of the national income in the form of taxes which would not be such a bad thing, although bad enough, if it were real money. The Government's thirst for money is increasing more rapidly than the increase in real incomes, and it is thus forced to create bogus money to meet its growing appetite.

of course been considerable improvement in capital goods and infrastructure, but a good deal of capital has been lost in the process, so the full impact has not been felt.

Stagflation: The net result is a slow increase in real national income around 3 per cent a year. Between 1975 and 1982, real national income has gone up just about 25 per cent, from Rs 40,000 crore to Rs 50,000 crore (at 1970-71 prices). The whole of the increase has come from agriculture, but from industry. Since income from the modern sector is considerably higher than from agriculture, it exerts terrific pressure on farm prices, leading to the peculiar phenomenon of stagflation, that is, stagnation in production accompanied by price inflation. We have seen the end of it but we have not the simple reason that New Delhi, being itself short of real cash, has taken to borrowing and spending money that is palpably bogus and is not backed by real incomes.

Until 1975-76 the total expenditure of the Central Government was around 10,000 crore. Last year, it is reported to have touched Rs 29,000 crore, a near three-fold increase in the same period which saw the national income go up by just 25 per cent. Where did New Delhi find the money? Well, of course, it borrowed from outside, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But the bulk of the funds came from its own printing presses.

There is also another angle. The Government's tax revenue now accounts for more than 15 per cent of the gross national product. It was less than 10 per cent in 1960-61 and has been steadily rising since. The Government thus takes away one-sixth of the national income in the form of taxes, which would not be such a bad thing, though bad enough, if it were real money. The Government's thirst for money is increasing more rapidly than the increase in real incomes, and it is thus forced to create bogus money to meet its growing appetite.

And why does the Government create bogus money? Firstly, the resources it has to create do not yield sufficient returns. They have to be kept going by infusions of money from time to time. Prices of nearly all commodities and services which are produced in the Government sector, from coal to electricity, have been raised repeatedly a number of times in a single year. The effort to show paper profits that are not there. We have invested nearly Rs 8,000 crore in the Central and state public sector projects including industrial and infrastructure projects, which between them yield a net surplus of Rs 8,000 crore a year. Instead, there is a loss of Rs 2,000 crore—even the state electricity boards have

able improve... structure... al has been... has not been... et result is... national... r. Between 19... me has gone... from Rs 40,000... 70-71 prices... ore, and nee... industry. Sm... a sector is no... from agricul... on farm price... phenomenon of... n in product... flation. We h... t but we have... New Delhi... has taken to... it is palpably... al incomes... total expend... ent was arou... it is reported... a, a near thre... d which saw... by just 25 pe... and the money... ed from outsi... al Monetary... the funds cam...

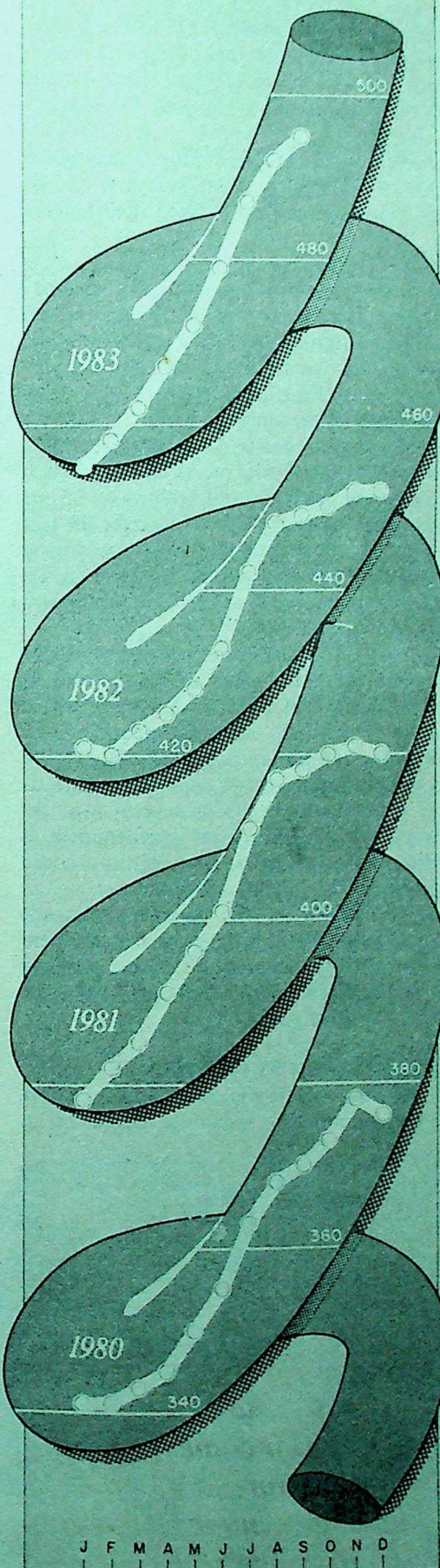
SECOND factor which is now increa- singly in evidence is black money. Black money which some people say accounts for anything between one-third and one-half of the national income has now ap- parently found its way into the grain market which does not rely solely on bank credit as it used to do. There is still a great deal of black money in gold and diamonds and other pre- cious metals and jewellery, as also in proper- ty in its traditional habitat, but the recent massive spurt in prices of foodgrains and other commodities is now attributed to the slow invasion of the grain markets by black money inter- ests. Gold prices are more or less stationary but the property boom has peaked to a point, perhaps temporarily.

Another aspect of black money, or possibly its other face, is the large cash economy which the smugglers are happily growing into. According to a newspaper report, there has been considerable in- crease—20 to 40 per cent—in the volume of contraband traffic which has spread from video cassettes, VCRs and synthetic fi- nal Monetary. Currently an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 freshly smuggled video cassettes, each valued at Rs 170, and over 6,000 VCRs (worth Rs 12,000 each) are reported to be waiting for customers in Bombay. Smuggled goods are to be paid for through silver but silver exports are not profitable any more and the payments are made increasingly in dollars. Dollars are purchased in the black market through non-resident sources here as well as abroad and the rupees pumped into the underground economy. The full im- plications of this burgeoning trade are not known but according to a source, any- thing between Rs 2,000 and Rs 3,000 crore is involved in this business in the post-harvest period which is the boom time for such activities.

Apparently there is so much of this kind of money about that it spills over into other activities, when, for one reason or another, prices of commodities lie low, as they generally do during the rainy season, or when there is a glut on the border, as there is now. On the other hand, the recession in in- dustrial commodities from steel to ce- ment, once favourites in the black money economy, is forcing black marketeers to seek outlets in the grain market. The marketeers have noticed that the farm sector is in something of a bind

PRICE SPIRAL

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX 1960=100
FOR URBAN NON-MANUAL WORKERS



and bumper harvests are so few and far between that they have virtually no effect on the market.

Grain Imports: The Government also seems to have recognised this for it is planning to import wheat—and possibly other grains—in a big way and is said to be negotiating with Australia for the import of 1.5 million tonnes of wheat at what are said to be attractive prices. The wheat will be apparently stored not in India but in Australia itself until such time as storage space can be found locally. This is really strange, considering that we are supposed to be having a bumper harvest on our hands, but the explanation is that buffer stocks have already risen to 17 million tonnes and the granaries are full and will not take a grain more. It is also possible, though the Government is not saying so, that it is unable to compete with private buyers and their black money hoards. It is altogether a new ball game but one for which the Government itself is responsible. For, who created black money in the first place?

As I said earlier, inflation is only a symptom, not a disease, and the real disease is so insidious that a 'bumper' harvest or two can hardly cure it. Those who argue that a kharif crop of 83 million tonnes should have sent prices reeling are asking for the moon, or are obviously too easily taken in by statistical jugglery. Firstly, we are not really sure whether the crop was really all that 'bumper'. After all, if Coal India can cook up its figures, why can't the Ministry of Agriculture do the same? For, if we are really in for a massive harvest, why is the ministry so keen to buy foreign grain, when it can get anything for the asking in every mandi in the north?

Money Famine: It is clear that this year's budget estimates have already gone awry and the deficit, when finally totted up, will be much more than the figure of Rs 1,300 crore mentioned in the budget. The Government is, however, scraping the bottom of its cash barrel for some of the bigger projects that were to be included in the current plan. There is no money apparently for the naphtha cracker in the Bombay High petrochemicals complex nor for another refinery that was to come up in the north. The new steel plants have also been virtually given up. If this is the state of affairs when the IMF loan has not been fully disbursed, what will things be like a year or so from now, when the first instalment on the loan will be due?

It is all very intriguing. Perhaps the ruling party is not really all that keen to bring prices down. It is easier for a party to extract its pound of flesh when there is a price boom than when prices are falling. In an election year, all calculations are political, and to hell with inflation.

Chart by B. K. Sharma

ICIM-INDIA TODAY ECONOMIC FORECAST

Under the Weather

WHAT motivates Indian industry must remain something of an enigma to those at the helm of affairs in this country. Plagued by years of licensing, protection and control, it is like a promising prize-fighter gone to seed—the victim of too much attention and indulgence. While it takes the count, the worried little men in government fidget in their seats, shuffle the odd file and console each other with a solemn whisper: it's the system.

If industry is to regain its position as the engine of growth that Mahalanobis envisaged, clearly a sharp change of pace is required. This ICIM-INDIA TODAY forecast, prepared by The Policy Group, looks at some of the lessons that can be drawn for the future from industrial performance in the past.

THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The glow of contentment on the peasant's countenance fortified by a bumper harvest under his belt, as he reaches for his purse, may be the only good thing that has happened to the economy this year. It may turn a potentially bad year into a moderately good one. The reasons:

► a good monsoon is expected to boost foodgrain output to a record 140 million tonnes, up 9 per cent from last year and more than 5 per cent above the previous high of 133 million tonnes in 1981. The success in agriculture should allay fears of foodgrain production levelling off in the near future.

► The main increase is, as expected, in kharif production and especially in rice output which should be 51.5 million tonnes with a significant upsurge of 20 per cent. Rabi performance, which is relatively better protected against the weather by irrigation, is unlikely to be as spectacular with foodgrains growing a mere 2 per cent, wheat output is expected to remain at last year's level of 42.5 million tonnes.

► while the harvest bounty will tend to prevent inflation from speeding up into double digits, the 8 per cent jump in the wholesale price index expected this year equals the price rise over the last two years together;

► the consumer's shopping basket will be costlier, with a 12 per cent inflation fuelled by food prices;

► industrial output, which has been sluggish so far with a particularly disturbing fall in the first two months of the current year, may recover to a modest growth of 4 per cent by the year-end in March;

► industry presents a mixed picture so there are no grounds to suspect an overall recession. Chemicals and metals are on a losing streak and have registered declines of 4.5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively over the last two months for which reliable information is available. Iron and steel is stagnant, while machinery and paper are looking up after a bad start to the year.

► on the basis of current predilections of the monetary authorities, credit, growing at 12 per cent, will not be very easy, while money supply (M3) will drift up at a steady 15 per cent; the full impact of this fairly bold monetary expansion on prices and outputs will not exhaust itself for several months; given that the industrial performance is rather shaky, easier credit conditions could alleviate some of the hardship;

► the deficit in the balance of trade should be smaller this year with import spending at Rs 13,500 crore and export earnings at Rs 10,000 crore, up 1.5 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

INDUSTRIAL PERFORMANCE

If Mrs Gandhi wishes to call an election, this, economically speaking, could be as

good a time as any. The memory of the kharif bonanza is still fresh in the minds of most people, industry's lacklustre performance is beginning to turn around and the situation shows signs of slowing down. Next year she may not be so lucky.

The key to economic prosperity over the next few years is undoubtedly rapid industrial expansion. In the last decade, the record of industrial growth has fallen to around 4.5 per cent, only a third of the rate of growth (INDIA TODAY, November 30). Of the major commodities, only chemicals and machinery have attained a marginally better average of around 6 per cent while basic inputs like steel and cement languish at 4 per cent.

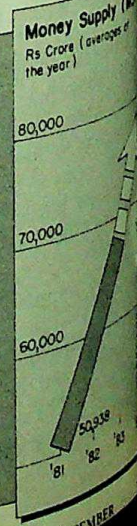
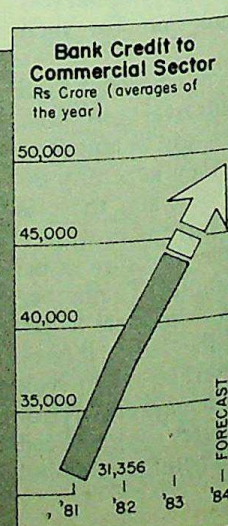
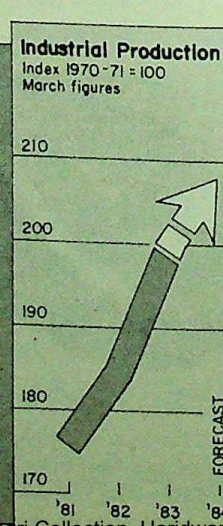
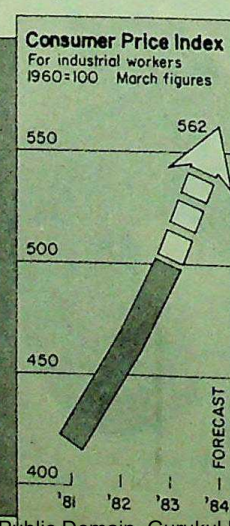
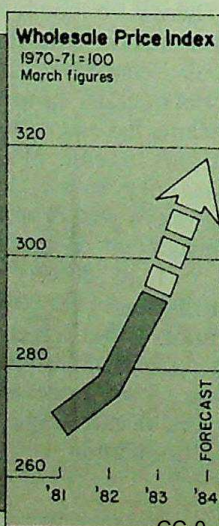
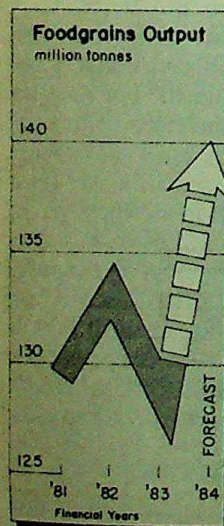
A compelling reason for this unimpressive performance is the slowdown in investment since the mid-'60s to an average of 5 per cent per annum, and especially public investment which constitutes almost half the total. The accompanying diversion of government resources to recurrent expenditure does not bode well for the oft-quoted slogan of "growth with equity"—we may end up getting neither.

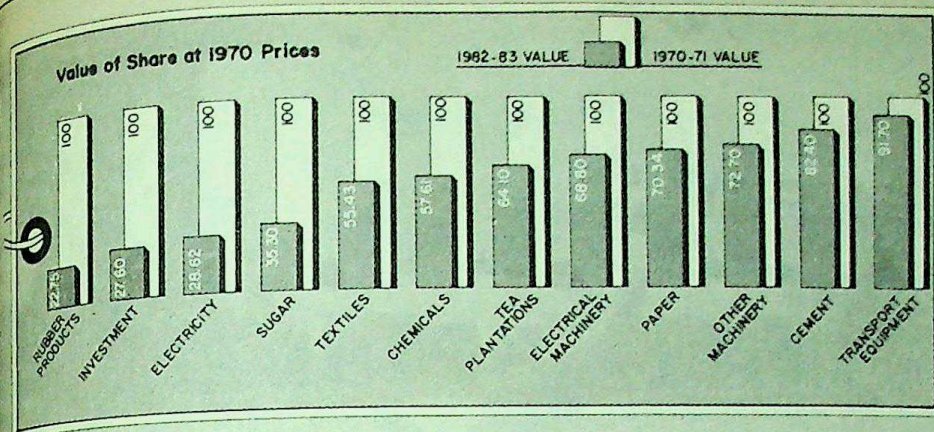
EMPLOYMENT

A direct result of the slackening pace in industry is its inability to generate employment at a fast enough rate to absorb the backlog of unemployed workers. Employment in industry rose 3.6 per cent per annum in the '70s and this was not due to machinery replacing men as is sometimes supposed. The ratio of capital to labour in industry has remained more or less constant.

WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY

Both labour productivity and the wage rate have drifted upward, though the wage rate has advanced more steadily, at a sedate pace of about 2 per cent per annum. There are, however, wide fluctuations from year to year as well as across industries. This indicates that on average, labour has reaped the benefits of its own higher productivity, but the





SHARING THE PRICE BOOM

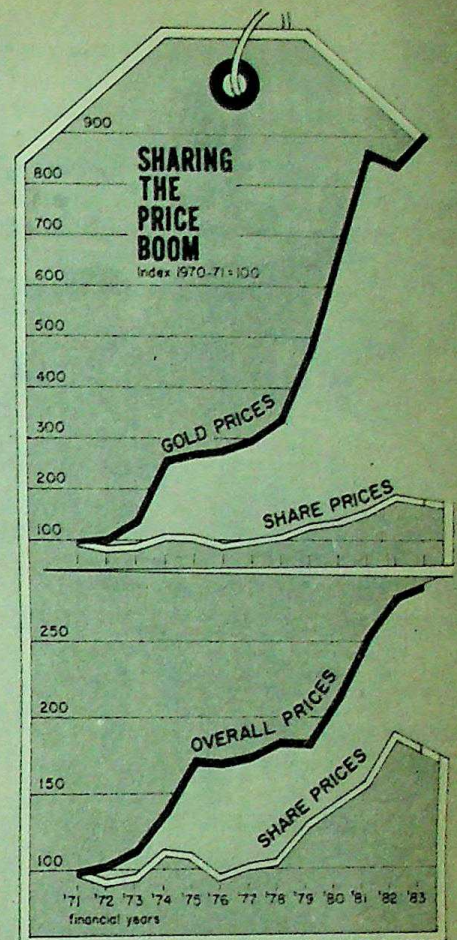
Should you be sensible and buy stock with the money your grandmother left you, or should you splurge on the new video, even though it interferes with the kids' homework? The evidence since 1970 indicates that you would be better off buying a consumer durable than investing in shares. Five years hence, inflation would have driven prices up by 75 per cent while your stock would appreciate only 33 per cent.

For the thrifty investor averse to indulging his whims, a viable option is to stash the money away in gold biscuits in the hole in the garden. The astute saver

who did this in 1970 would have tripled the purchasing power of his money today.

A closer look at the share market reveals that the big losers have been electricity, rubber and sugar where the capital today is worth less than a quarter of its original value in 1970. Not a single group maintains even the 1970 value of the share in terms of what it would buy today.

Of course, it is quite possible for the sharp operator to switch in and out of fast moving shares instead of hanging on to the coat-tails of a long run trend; so don't be surprised if the folks in the corner house down the street are laughing all the way to their next Mercedes.



SHORTAGE OF INPUTS

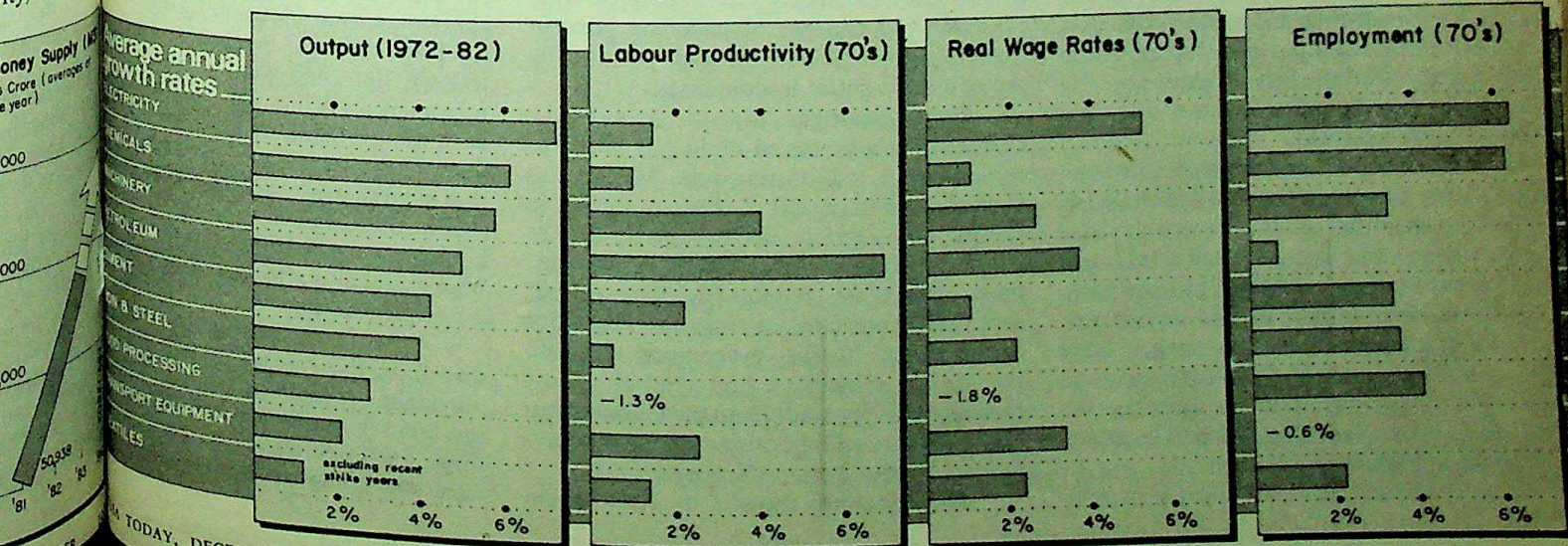
The claim that industrial expansion has been stifled by the scarcity of essential inputs like power, coal and transport services does not hold water. At best the scarcities can explain shortfalls in performance in some industries in some years—but not the general industrial malaise.

While it is foolhardy to attempt simplistic solutions, it is tempting to put forward tentative suggestions. First, it is clear that the pace of investment has to be stepped up. Apart from pushing up public investment, a congenial climate for private investment is necessary. A reduction in the rate of

tax on incomes could provide the much needed boost in demand. Recent research has shown that a 10 per cent cut in income tax rate actually induces a 3 per cent rise in revenue.

Second, to finance public investment the Government could borrow from the banks. An increase in the yield of government securities could also make them a viable alternative for the ordinary investor.

Finally, a steady monetary policy that allows a steady growth of money supply at around 12 per cent per annum, can contain inflation and create a stable environment for higher investment and sustained growth.





The first batch of imported cars in the Maruti factory: unprecedented rush

MARUTI

Made in Japan—For Now

THE DREAM has survived the dreamer—after a fashion. Sanjay Gandhi's Maruti Ltd was to be a triumph of personal enterprise; but Maruti Udyog Ltd is a government-owned company. Sanjay's cars were to be 100 per cent Indian; those that rolled out of the factory gates near the Delhi-Haryana border a few days ago were 100 per cent Japanese.

Some of Sanjay's other legacies also survive—after a fashion. The outside 900,000 sq ft factory shed that he built in a fit of automobile megalomania has started cracking in places, because Sanjay did not provide room for the beams to expand in the summer heat. In any case the roof was too weak to have held aloft any assembly line equipment; so this year the engineers have set up new structural supports. If the dreamer had lived, the dream would have surely died.

Nevertheless, Sanjay's spirit was invo-

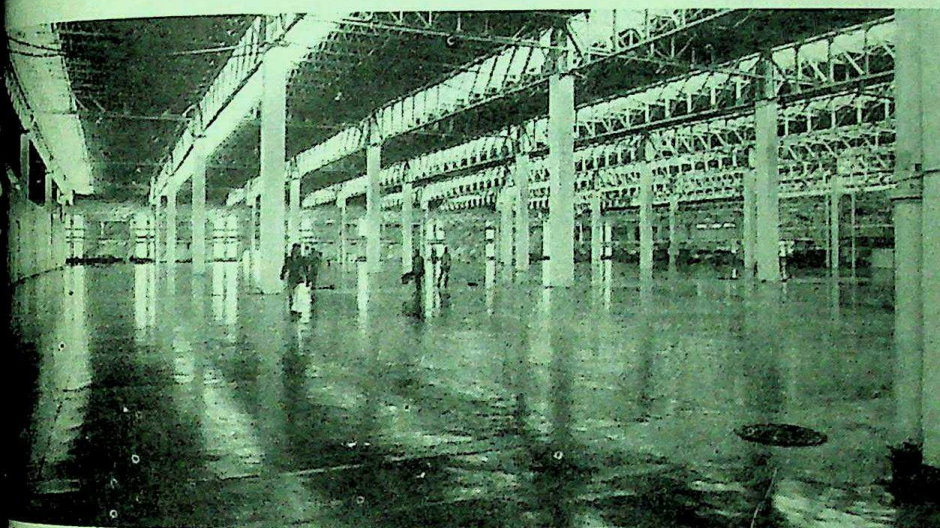
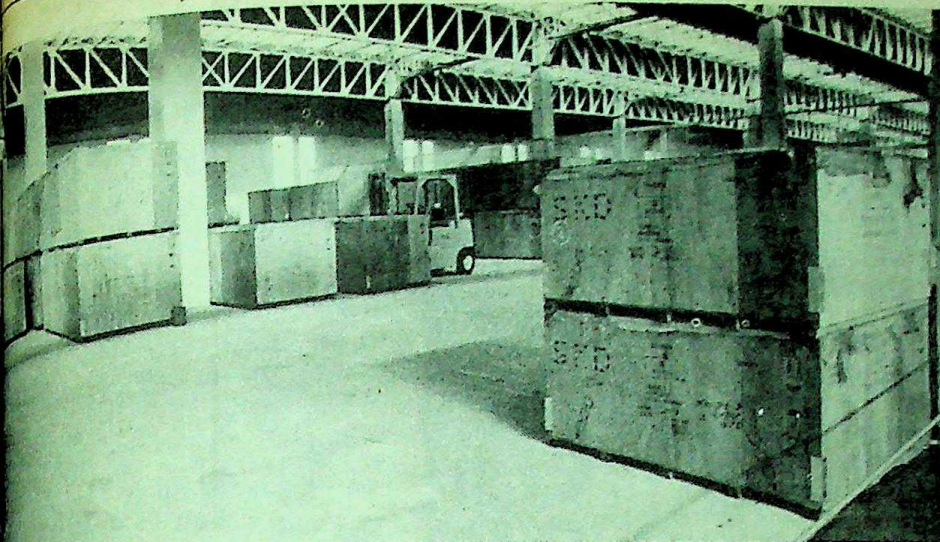
ked with great deliberation last fortnight. The factory was inaugurated on Sanjay's 37th birth anniversary, by his mother. And a project that in Sanjay's time evoked only cynicism and charges of misusing government machinery is now the hope of virtually the country's entire middle class.

Fully Imported: Maruti is still the Government's favoured child. In order to bring the car out on schedule, Maruti has been allowed to import the bulk of the car in the first year—in fact the full car itself for the first few months. In the engineering industry, most projects are required to have 60 per cent indigenous content from the start. But in the case of Maruti, everything, down to the Maruti name-plate and symbol, is just now being shipped out from the Hamamatsu factory of its collaborator and part-shareholder, Suzuki Motor Company.

The company showed its clout again

when an intrepid customs collector in Bombay slapped a prohibitive 162.5 per cent duty on semi-knocked down (SKD) kits. Maruti had imported from Suzuki. The official argued that the concessional import duty of 40 per cent for "components of sufficient cars" did not extend to SKD packages. So Maruti's cars are complete sub-assemblies. So Maruti had to pay the 162.5 per cent duty on the first batch of cars (the duty alone totalling up to more than the price that will be charged from the customer), but then went on to get the Government to issue an amendment to the customs notification to include sub-assemblies. Customs officials in Bombay suggest that even this may not be enough so further notifications may be necessary. In a similar fashion earlier this year, excise duty had been slashed in a manner tailored to Maruti's requirements.

A week before the "inauguration" therefore, the Maruti factory presented an odd sight. Of the four "shops" that make up the factory, work had barely begun in the forge and welding shops. Steel structures were still going up, and the installation



Crates of car sub-assemblies (top) and the as yet empty machine shop: miles to go

machinery was still a long way off. In the paint shop, construction work was complete but the cars will get an Indian coat of paint only in June. Finally, in the machine shop—which will make the engine and do the car assembly—the overwhelming feeling is of a vast space. On one side of the 320,000 sq ft hall are huge crates of car sub-assemblies just brought in from Bombay port. On another is the assembly line—waiting for the tangle to be cleared before it can move again. In a third corner is the equipment, and next to it lie some red and white cars—cleared from exorbitant rates of duty and there representing to the company a combination of anything up to Rs 15 lakh. Apart from these, and some cars lying around that are damaged in transit, the machine shop has nothing to offer, the machines will be in place only in mid-1985.

Schedule: All this is of course as it will be, given the way the project was forced. For work at the factory is on schedule, 20,000 cars will be “produced” in

1984-85, 40,000 the following year, and on to one lakh cars in 1988-89. Even the project cost of Rs 269 crore will not be exceeded, say company officials. If anything, the effort is to step up the production process so that all the 135,000 people who have booked Maruti cars, vans and buses will get their vehicles by March 1987.

The unprecedented rush for the car is not surprising, for a Maruti on the road is outstanding value. At somewhere between Rs 52,000 and Rs 55,000 (depending on where you are in the country), the car is up to 40 per cent cheaper than domestic rivals. Tests conducted at Ahmednagar yielded a mind-stretching 25.95 km on a litre of petrol at a steady driving speed of 50 kmph. The engine size is only 800 cubic centimetres (cc), against Premier's 1100 cc, but both deliver roughly the same brake horsepower. And the Maruti's turning circle is 4.4 metres—less than half that of the Ambassador.

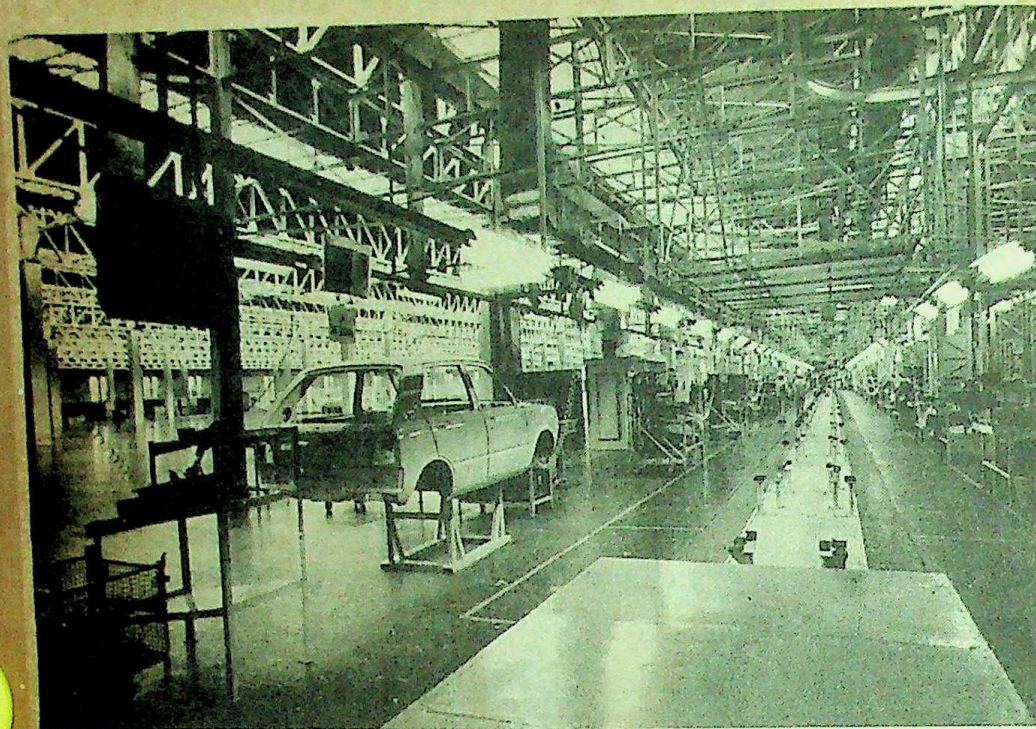
The car is a motorist's delight in other ways. Normal Indian batteries have a life of 108 shallow-cycles (each cycle comprising one partial charging and discharging). The

Maruti batteries will in comparison have 200 deep-cycles (full charging and discharging), making for an infinitely longer lifespan. The radiator water will not need attention for months on end because of a system of recouping evaporating steam by condensing it and ploughing it back into the cycle. Periodic greasing and lubrication can likewise be ignored for months on end, as also the oil and air filters. The headlights will be brighter, and the rear-view mirror will have non-glare characteristics—no blinding by headlights from cars at the tail. The wheels and tyres will be finely balanced for weight, making for less vibrations and a smoother ride. In short, the Maruti is not a rough-hewn tin-pot.

Difficult Task: Indigenising a car to these specifications is not easy. Up to two-thirds of what goes into a car is supplied by other companies—tyres, wheels, batteries, upholstery, electrical parts, lights, horns. And, as it turns out, nothing that is produced in the country at present meets Maruti's specifications. Says Dr R.B. Deshpande, general manager in charge of developing ancillary supplies: “We have decided not to dilute Suzuki's specifications. So nothing can be bought off the shelf—not even nuts and bolts.”

As a result, Chloride India has developed a new, powerful battery after upgrading its technology. Dunlop has installed new balancing equipment to produce better balanced tyres to finer tolerances. And all manner of companies are quickly trying up new foreign collaborations in order to qualify as Maruti suppliers. Alpha Toyo has tied up with Toyo of Japan for mirrors and tail-lamps (the mirrors will absorb three times the glare that standard Indian mirrors do); Shriram Fibres has tied up with Nippo Denso, also of Japan, for electrical components; Vikas Motors, which hopes to supply the air-conditioners for Maruti's deluxe model, has in turn tied up with Sankyo.

The most obvious thing about this list is that all the collaborating companies are Japanese, who are clearly making hay. And the message seems to have got through to Indian companies that it is not just a collaboration but a Japanese collaboration that is helpful. A paint company spokesman said his company was having a devil of a time trying to bag the Maruti order, because the rival Goodlass Nerolac had tied up with Kansai Paints of Japan. And Ceat Tyres sees a clear advantage in giving up its Italian connection and negotiating a tie-up with Yokohama Tyres. Even the \$75 million loan that Maruti has negotiated for financing the imports from Suzuki is with the Bank of Tokyo. Besides all this, quite naturally, much of the machinery that will be installed in the factory is going to be Japanese as well, including two



The Maruti assembly line: hope of the middle class

robots in the welding shop. Company officials see this as logical. Says Marketing Director R.C. Bhargava: "The Japanese do have the best technology today, there is no denying that. And the Bank of Tokyo has given us excellent financial terms for the loan. We have no complaints."

Uniform Treatment: On the unquestionably positive side, much else about the Maruti operation will be Japanese too, starting with the uniforms: All 4,000 workers that the company will eventually employ will wear the same company-supplied clothes: an attractive light grey tunic cut to Suzuki specifications, and designed to leave no hard surface (like a button) exposed, for this could scratch off car paint. The only differentiating factor is the colour of the cap, for functional reasons: grey for workers, blue for supervisory staff and white for managerial cadres.

Everyone eats the same food in the same self-service canteen; no one in the entire complex has an individual office cabin, except for the Chairman and Managing Director V. Krishnamurthy, and work spaces in the offices are designed for easy interaction.

They will not start the day by singing a company song, but Maruti clearly intends to start a new chapter in the history of the country's automobile industry. Productivity, for instance, will be 25 cars per employee per year—compared to less than two in Hindustan Motors. Bhargava says that his company's productivity will be equivalent to that in a European car plant, though much lower than Japanese standards, which are geared to producing 50 cars per man per year.

If these promises are eventually lived up

to, the project's very chequered history may at least arguably have been worth all the favourite-son treatment that began more than a decade ago. For if Maruti Udyog produces a quality car for Rs 52,000 that gives 26 km for a litre of petrol, it will have brought individual middle class buyers back into the market for motor-cars.

—T.N. NINAN

THE GALADARIS

Overdrawn

GOLD trading, an attempt to buy the Nizam's jewels, an offer to invest in a fertiliser plant: the Galadaris have often made news in India. Last fortnight they were making news in Dubai too, and precipitating a banking crisis when the Government of the tiny emirate took control of the Union Bank of the Middle East (UBME), promoted and largely owned by Abdul Wahab Galadari. Galadari was removed from the chairmanship of the bank, and some of his property attached as security.

This unprecedented step was provoked by Galadari's failure to reduce his borrowings from the UBME from 40 per cent to 5 per cent of the bank's capital and reserves—as stipulated by the central bank of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). But well-informed banking circles say that the flashpoint came only after an argument between Galadari and the Dubai prime minister, who is the son of the rulers of Dubai, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed al Maktoum. Earlier, the Sheikh had been negotiating with Galadari to buy out a large hotel in Dubai—the money from

which would have helped Galadari with his bank borrowings. The negotiations broke through for failure to agree on a price. The ruler fell ill and his son then took control into his own hands.

Other events followed in quick succession. The Bank of Oman, owned by the Ghurairs—who have also been negotiating deals in India—caused a second crisis when it informed the UAE central bank that its own directors would not be able to reduce their borrowings to less than 5 per cent of capital and reserves. And, given the volatile business conditions in the Gulf area, it was rife as to whether yet other banks would also plead helplessness.

None of them, however, are expected to get into trouble the way Galadari has, bankers say—because they are unlikely to get into similar altercations with Dubai rulers. In any case the UAE central bank would hardly take over the entire banking system. Meanwhile, Abdul Wahab's two brothers, with whom he had parted ways some time ago—were reportedly rushing in to help save the family name from disgrace in the business community. And it was left surprisingly unclear as to what the next move would be.

Indian Link: There is intriguing evidence of an Indian connection to all this. Till just before the UBME takeover, the State Bank of India (SBI) and the Bank of India had been negotiating with Galadari to take charge of the bank under a management contract—a deal which would have given the Indian banks access to the bank's branch network through which they could have accessed funds. All this is now on ice, till matters are sorted up.

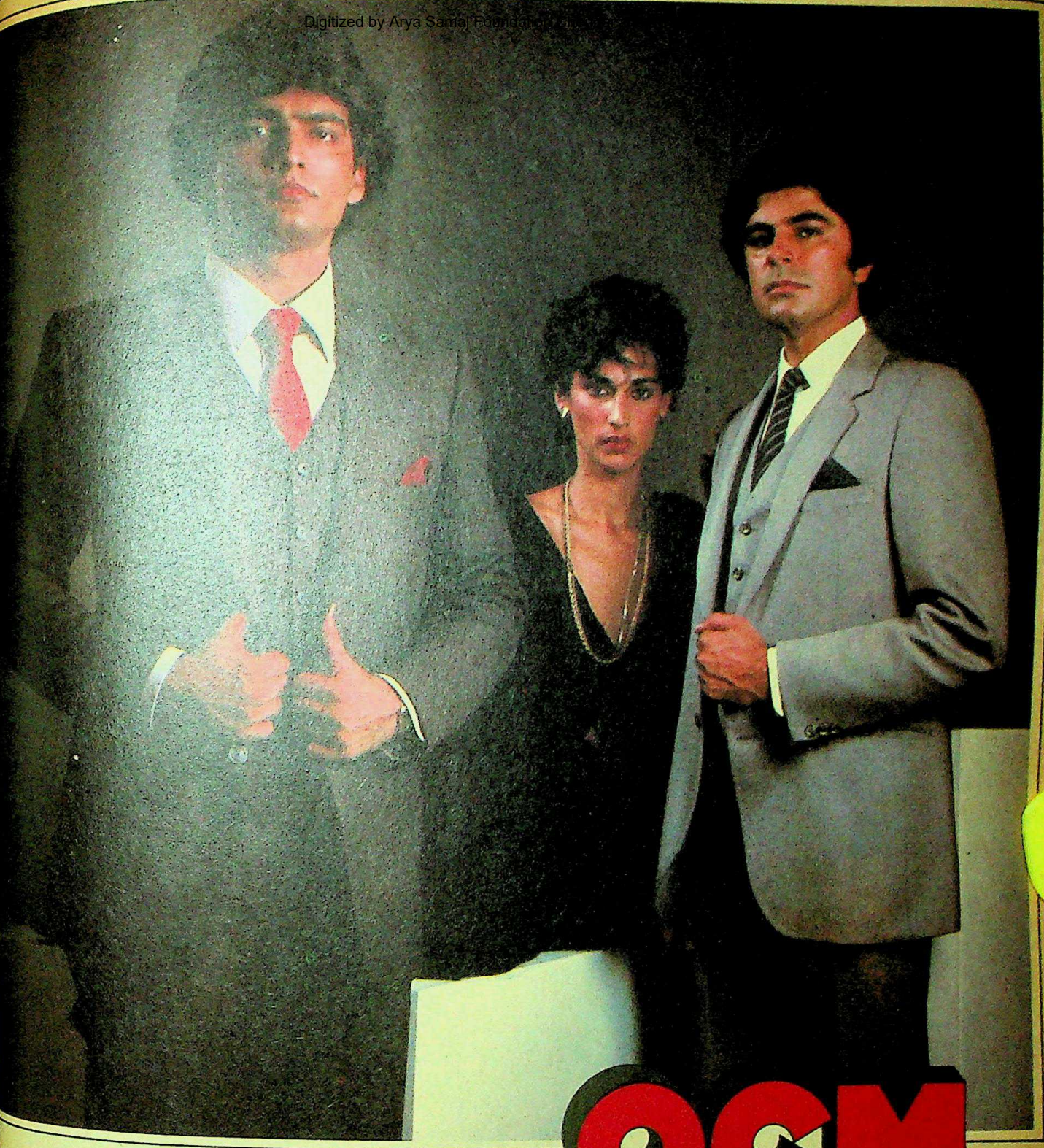
The SBI had also been a major lender to both Galadari and the UBME. At one time Galadari owed the bank about \$75 million (Rs 75 crore), while the UBME had borrowed \$47 million (Rs 47 crore). Many of these loans had been given without either the full collateral or the prior approval of the bank's board or the prior approval of the bank's central office in Bombay, and at a time when Galadari had been even more tightly controlled for cash than he was last fortnight.

The bank has been trying to sort out the situation for over a year. Most of the loans have come back, but Galadari still has outstanding of between Rs 10 crore to Rs 15 crore. Much of this, however, is covered by other guarantees, so that the bank's risk may be no more than Rs 5 crore.

The SBI has also given some of its loan facilities to the UBME—but this can be immediately recalled, and the bank can be made safer now than before, with the Dhahi Government deciding to pump money into the bank. The SBI, therefore, may have overcome its problems but the Galadaris cannot be said for Abdul Wahab Galadari.

—T.N. NINAN with KUNAL

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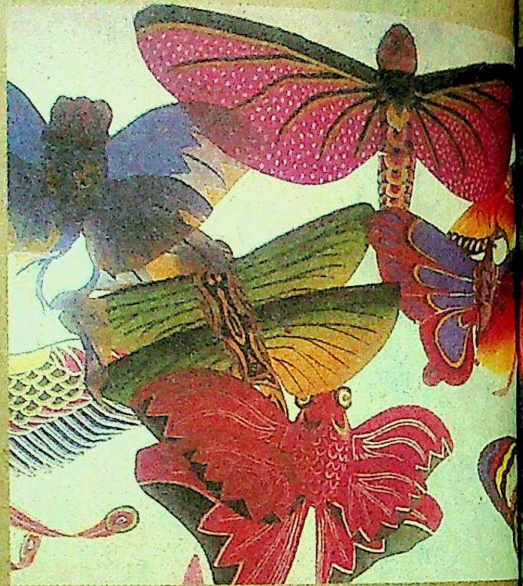
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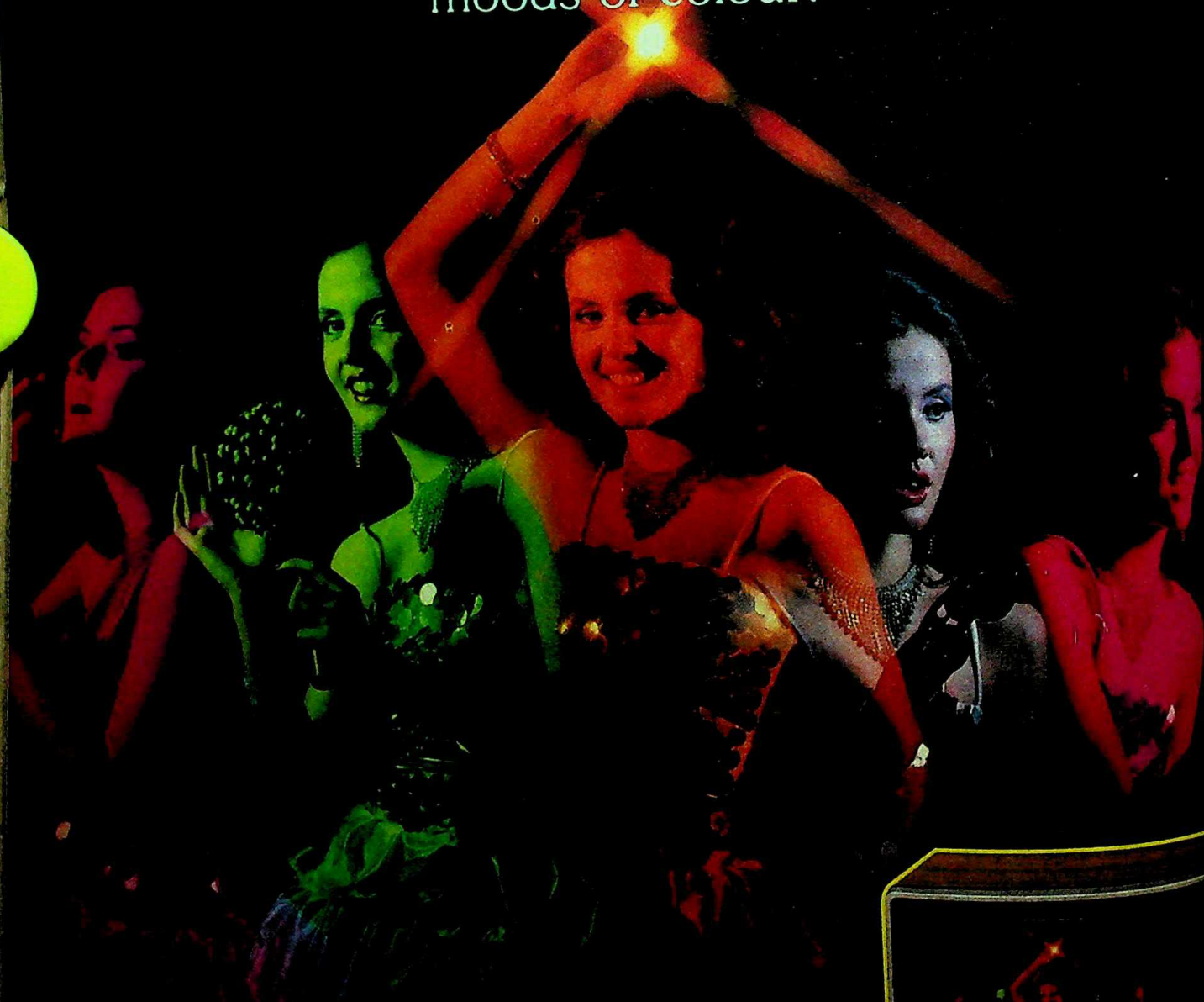
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RESIDENT INVESTMENT

The Reliance Mystery

THE LAST has not been heard of the scheme for inviting non-resident investments in Indian companies. After prolonged and continuing controversy over Raj Paul's purchases of DCM and shares, it is now the turn of the Bombay-based high-flier Reliance Textile Industries (1982 sales: Rs 409 crore) under the spotlight.

The story goes back to when 11 non-resident companies invested Rs 22.5 crore in Reliance shares. The point of there being some unusual in this came with announcement of the companies' names, which included unlikely specimens as Cro Investments and Fiasco Investments.

The Finance Minister, Mr. Mukherjee, had disclosed in July that these companies were registered in the UK. A Calcutta newspaper, *The Telegraph*, then broke the news of the companies' existence in the country when the investments had been made, and that the registrations took place only after Mr. Mukherjee gave the companies' names in Parliament.

Suspicious Companies: If this was a scandal—and provoked privilege notices in Parliament against Mr. Mukherjee—the minister came out with a correction that cleared the mystery but promptly set a second in its place. Mr. Mukherjee said that the 11 companies were not registered in the UK but in the Isle of Man—an offshore tax haven which comes under the suzerainty of the British crown but has its own legislature and tax laws. British companies, it now turned out, had been a twin set up later with identical names—for some mysterious yet unknown purpose. Mr. Mukherjee slipped up further by getting the names of the companies wrong and had to make further corrections in Parliament which suggested very much of homework, if not some-

thing more. Asked for his comments, Reserve Bank Governor Manmohan Singh vouchsafed for the genuineness of the investing companies: "These companies are registered in the Isle of Man. The mistake was merely verbal confusion, of which too much is being made now."



Dhirubhai Ambani: in the spotlight



Pranab Mukherjee: belated corrections

Subsequent investigations by INDIA TODAY confirm that 11 companies were in fact registered in the Isle of Man at varying points between November 1979 and July 1982—before they acquired the Reliance shares. But then, who had registered the twin companies with identical names in Britain, and why?

This, however, was in the immediate context only the less consequential part of what promises to become an intriguing and involved affair. For subsequent disclosures by another Calcutta newspaper, *Business Standard*, pointed out that the Reliance shares had been bought by the overseas companies not at the price ruling on the stock exchange but at a negotiated price that was some 20 per cent lower than the then ruling price. On a total investment of Rs 22 crore, this meant a loss of over Rs 4 crore—in foreign exchange.

Questions Raised: This could have serious complications. For although it is normal for bulk transfers of shares to be negotiated between the buyer and seller—and the public sector financial institutions often do this—there were several reasons for questions to be raised in this instance.

First, the non-resident investment (NRI) scheme specifically forbids transactions done through private negotiations, and stipulates that the shares must be bought and sold "through the stock exchange".

Second, if negotiated deals could be allowed in one case, anyone in the country could then sell his shares to a related non-resident at a lower-than-market price. After the stipulated period of one year, the overseas party could then sell them back at the ruling market price and make a clean profit. This would thus become a new channel for transferring money out of the country.

Third, which shareholder would be willing to sell his shares to a non-resident at a price that is lower than what he could get on the floor of the stock exchange? Only those interested in a bulk share transfer would negotiate such a deal—and, outside of the financial institutions, how many such people would there be?

Winter of '83

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ANDER LIDAY



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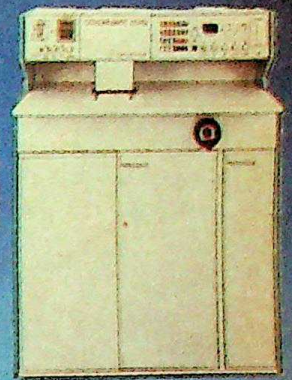
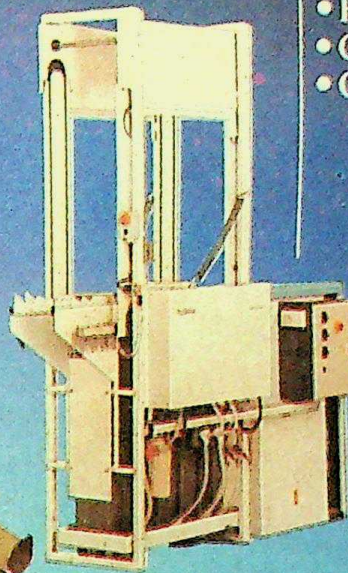
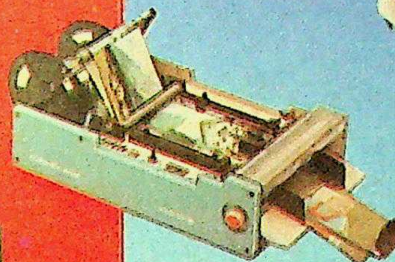
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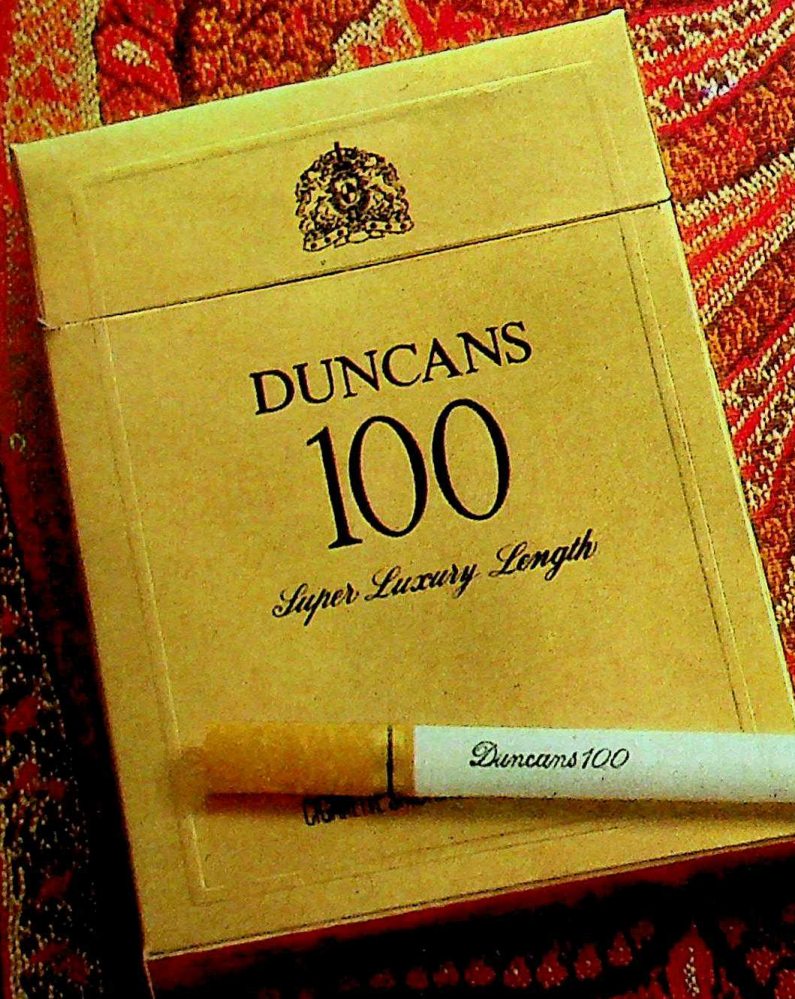
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The Odd Couple

INDIA's relationship with Hollywood has run roughly parallel to one of the all-time themes enshrined in American cinema: love-at-first-sight followed by estrangement, misunderstandings and a final renewal of affection. Still, sometimes seemed that the last happy "ever after" may be missing from this roller.

Last September, when the special agreement between the Government and the powerful American film producers consortium, the Motion Pictures Export Association of America (MPEAA) came to an end after three years, there were the rumours of the Indians terminating the agreement. Ministry of Information and Public Relations (I&B) officials were giving broad hints that matters may come to a sticky end this time, with the ability of the MPEAA having to wind up its operation in India. But when the Government actually gave the American consortium a grace-and-favour extension for another six months, till March-end, it became clear that it was willing to renegotiate the agreement, albeit on different terms. As one I&B Ministry official put it: "What we're asking for is more participation in the MPEAA operation in India."

Official Objections: In the new arrangement that is expected to be finalised next year, the Bombay-based National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), which since 1980, with the amalgamation of the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) and the Indian Motion Picture Corporation (IMPEC), has become the centralisation body for the import and export of films, will jointly import American films with the MPEAA. However, the decision for the new partnership has been affected by several other objections by the Government.

It is pointed out that the MPEAA continues to dump trash on India: of the 100 American films it imported in 1982, about 70 per cent were B-grade, horror movies and a growing number of cheap, made-in-Hong Kong arts junk of the kung fu variety. Further, the American distribution and exhibition network has retained its stronghold with virtually no hope for other countries surfacing on the market. And also that Hollywood films, besides being of substandard quality, were cutting into playing time for Indian films, there being a chronic short-

tage of exhibition theatres. But the Government's chief grouse was that the NFDC's chances of distributing foreign films independently were seriously threatened by the monopoly of the American operation.

The MPEAA, however, saw the situation differently. For them, the Indian market had stopped being lucrative a long time ago, given the stringency of the present arrangement. Any further tightening of the belt could mean their Indian operation would not be able to make ends meet. "Let's face it," says Captain Denis Pereira, the New



Visuals from martial arts movies (top) and Pereira (above left) and Tambay Vaidya: renegotiating terms

Delhi-based spokesman of the MPEAA, "India hasn't got the kind of money to get the top American films for immediate release. The MPEAA's presence here has been to enrich the product of the Indian industry, not supplement it. We have our movies playing in roughly 100 theatres of the 1,200 in the country—that's no take-over." Pereira further argues that when people come to him grumbling about the best of American movies not showing in India, he asks them to name which ones, and they have no answer. But he admits to the better films getting a delayed release.

Stringent Arrangement: Such delays are only to be expected under the terms of the MPEAA's existing arrangement with the Government which gives the Americans barely enough financial manoeuvrability, and no room for fat profits. Signed between Jack Valenti, president of the MPEAA and A.K. Dutt, then secretary, I&B Ministry in 1980, it limited the scope of MPEAA (made up of Columbia, Warners, 20th Century Fox, United Artists, Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Universal, Buena Vista and Allied Artists) earnings in India under the following conditions:

- the MPEAA would be able to use 40 per cent of its annual gross takings in box-office receipts for operating expenses;
- another 45 per cent would be blocked for financing foreign productions and co-productions in India, or be available for interest-free loans to the Government with a comfortable repayment facility;
- the remaining 15 per cent might be repatriated, the sum not exceeding a ceiling of Rs 40 lakh annually.

The MPEAA has grossed about Rs 15 crore in its three-year term. Under the second clause of the arrangement, it had approximately Rs 7 crore in frozen funds in India, of which it has loaned Rs 3 crore to the NFDC, another Rs 70 lakh to the Children's Film Society, and invested Rs 2.2 crore in the recent James Bond production in India, *Octopussy*. The remaining Rs 1.1 crore is lying around, along with another Rs 2 crore pending repatriation.

Indian Participation: In addition to this arrangement, the MPEAA is expected to pay the NFDC 15 per cent of cost, insurance and freight (CIF) value on every print imported into the country. While the NFDC continues to import American films produced by non-MPEAA companies, it is clear that the Government's hardened stance towards the MPEAA arises out of its demand for greater NFDC participation in the import of MPEAA films. Although it is legitimate for the Government to ask for a closer scrutiny of

the kind of films imported by MPEAA (to ensure that they are of a better quality and released faster), the NFDC can hardly be expected to break into the hard-boiled business of international film purchase with any substantial success independently. The fledgling organisation has neither the money, the expertise nor the distribution capacity. American film companies such as 20th Century Fox, Warners and MGM, on the other hand, are veterans of all seasons and some of them have a history extending back to over 50 years of business in India. Moreover, the Americans are eager to maintain their presence in India, not least of all politically, as American films have traditionally helped in soft-soaping opinion anywhere.

The NFDC on its part is looking for collaborative support. According to Managing Director Malati Tambay Vaidya, the NFDC buys foreign films either on outright purchase or on a percentage sharing basis, and handles the distribution as well. It pays anywhere between US \$3,000 and \$40,000 (Rs 30,000 and Rs 4 lakh) as fee for outright purchase (chicken-feed compared to recent Hollywood hits such as *Superman* and *Star Wars* which have fetched up to a million US dollars in European countries). Or it buys them on a 50:50 or 40:60 sharing of profits. Inclusive of customs duty, which is paid in rupees, and the cost of materials such as prints paid in US dollars, NFDC's expenditure on foreign films rose from Rs 62 lakh in 1980-81 to Rs 77 lakh in 1981-82.

Renewed Negotiations: If the MPEAA were to shut shop in India, the NFDC would find it almost impossible to go it alone. Instead of forcing such an option, the Government has now agreed to renegotiate the existing arrangement. Although the terms of the new arrangement are being worked out (the I&B Ministry has asked the NFDC to submit its recommendations, and Pereira will soon be on his way to check out with his principals in America), the new agreement, to be finalised early next year, will now be between the MPEAA and NFDC.

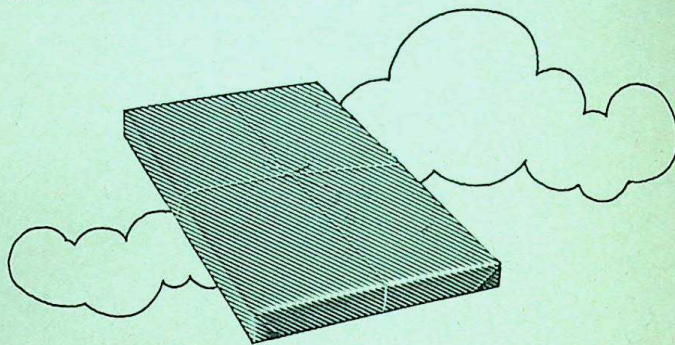
It will be designed to call for greater participation by the NFDC in the MPEAA's operation. This will mean that the NFDC will have increased sharing in the MPEAA's takings in India, besides acting as a discriminatory body for screening the wheat from the chaff. The MPEAA's imports will be substantially lowered, and the NFDC will increase its import activity as well as seek to establish its own distribution system more firmly.

As there are few precedents to such an arrangement, it remains to be seen how it will work out. Hollywood being more hard-hearted in real life than on the screen, its new partnership with India may contain quite a few unforeseen twists.

—SUNIL SETHI

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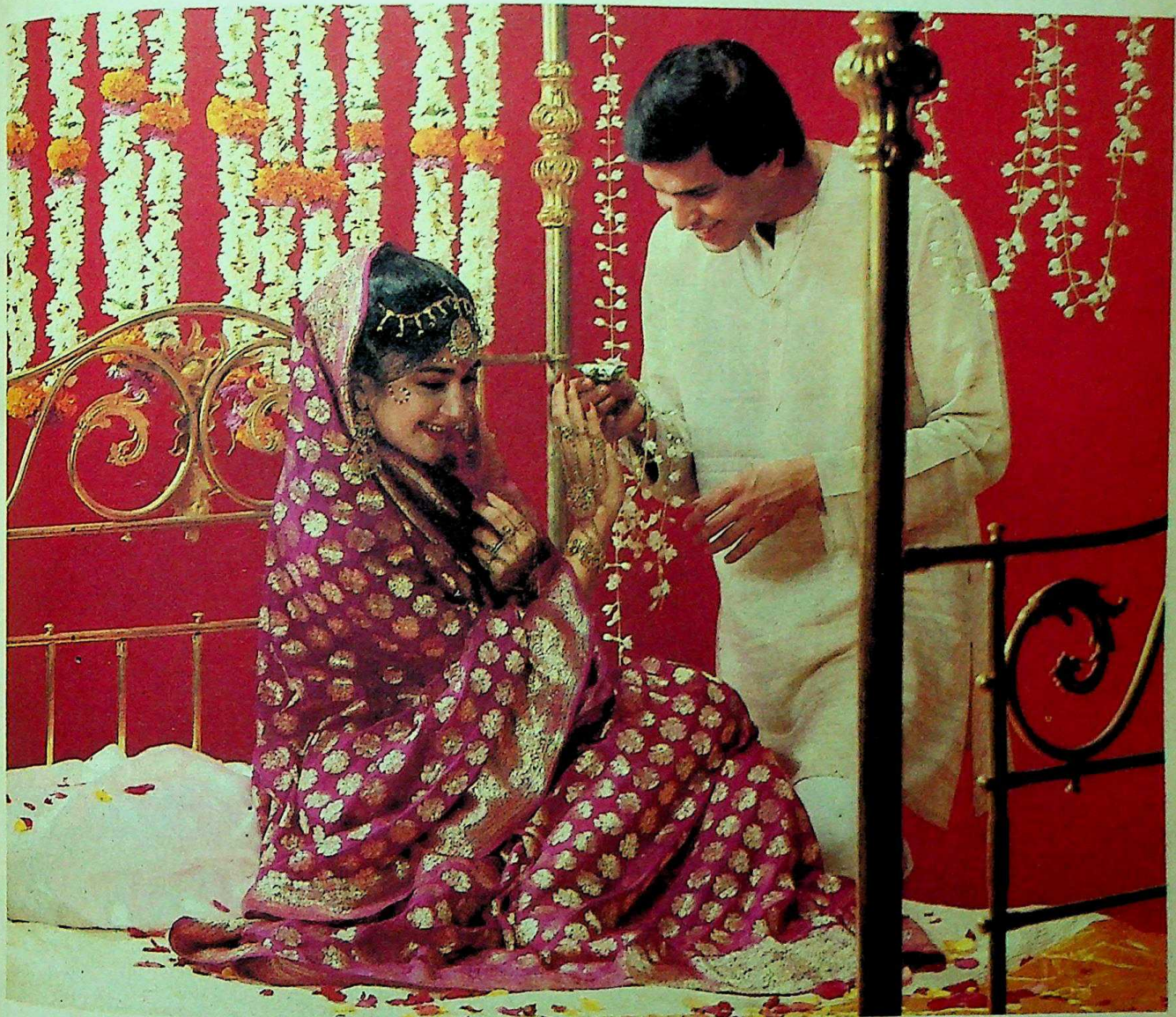
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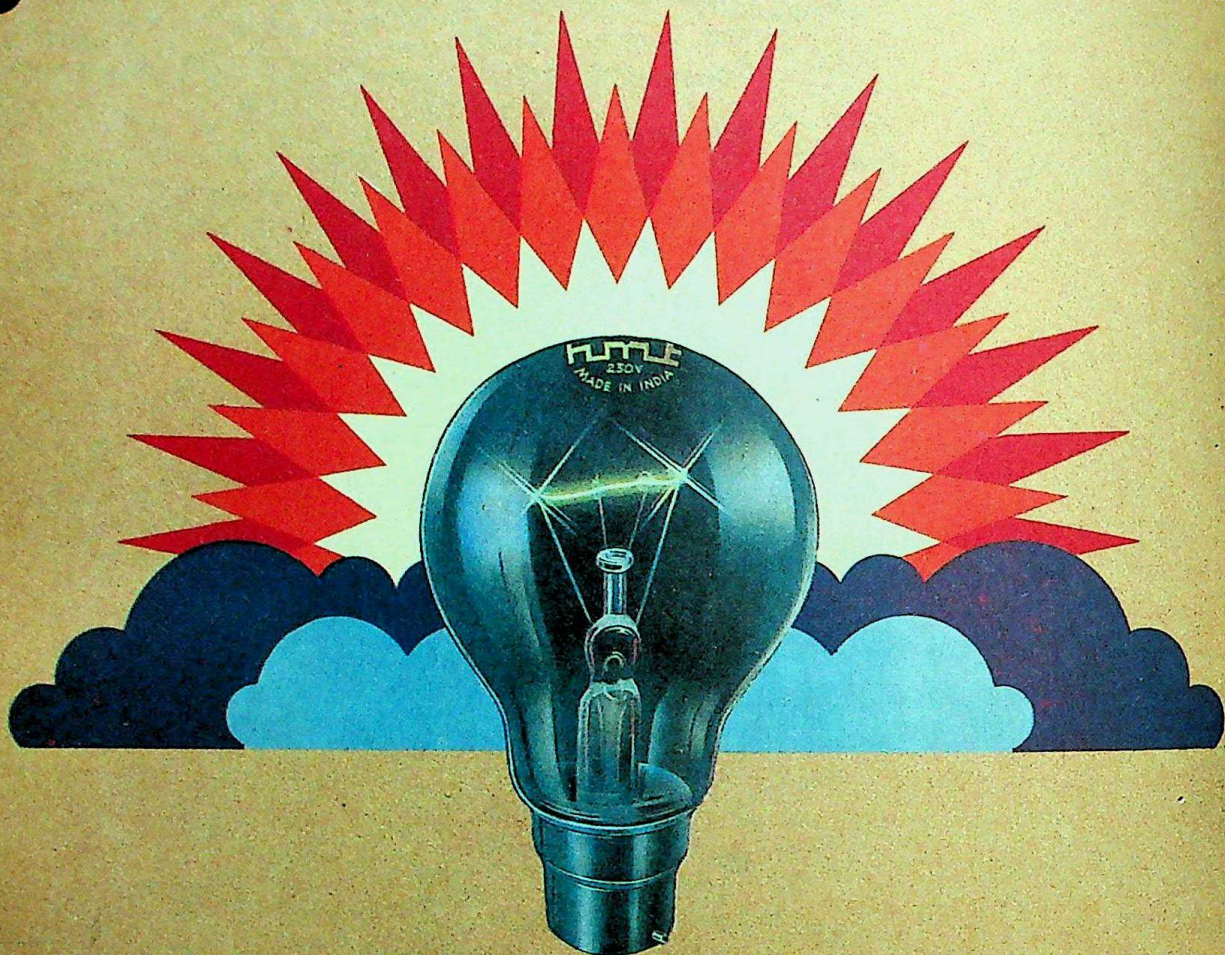
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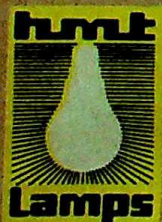
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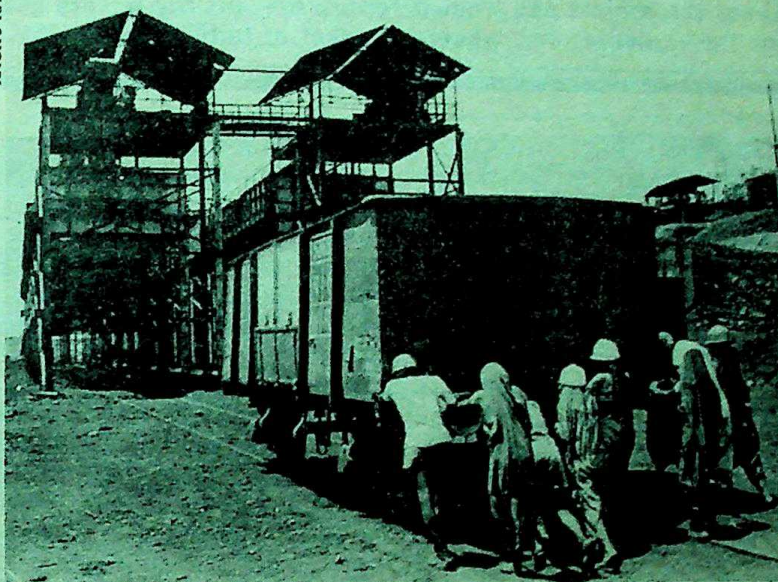


Britannia Top

PIA

According to CIL officers, mine manufacturing is always shown more than they produced, to 'achieve' targets. Ex-Union Minister Bhargava of CIL: "There is no doubt that a review is long overdue. I have the hope that one month's short-term plan will be made up in the next but that

RAGHU RAI



Hari Om Gulati



Nevertheless, if Gujral pushes matters too far, a conflagration might well result and render his other efforts counter-productive. His real test now lies in judging how far he can push, and how hard, without forcing a flashpoint.

DECEMBER 31, 1983

On their way from Enfield: an all-new generation of machines

The manufacturers of the legendary Bullet motorcycle are on the threshold of a new and major event.

Enfield is engineering a new breed of machines, under licence from Zundapp Werke GmbH, West Germany's two-wheeler specialists. In addition to motorcycles, Zundapp is also experienced in the manufacture of aircraft engines and armoured carriers.

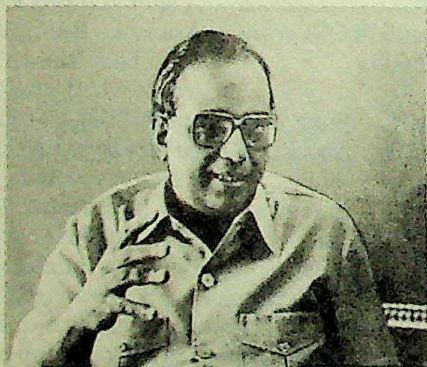
The Enfield-Zundapp collaboration made news in the media when the agreement was signed in end

As the first batch of bikes get ready to ride out, Enfield's Managing Director, Mr S Viswanathan, talks about the project and what it represents: for the buyers of these machines, for the exploding two-wheeler market in India, and for the Company.

Q. We've been hearing about Enfield's new project from time to time, but there's been no statement from the Company. Was there a reason for keeping the project under wraps this long?

A. Good reason... and I think you'll agree, when I explain what this project is meant to achieve.

We're not making just another bike.



Mr S Viswanathan: "...imported knowhow is valid only if it is related to the consumer's needs".

From the start, it has been our intention to produce a range of superbly crafted, fuel-efficient, good-looking performance machines - a breed uniquely built for India and never seen before.

Having decided that much, we decided to lay a few ground rules for producing them.

Only the finest engineering in the world could be considered. It also had to be the right technology for India... imported knowhow, after all, is valid only if it is related to the consumer's needs.

The final product had to be a hardy, durable machine. And good-looking, beyond doubt.

To put these values together was an exacting task. Till we were sure of completing it, we didn't wish to make any claims.

Q. I see what you mean. But there are several world-leaders in two-wheelers. What made you seek a German collaboration?

A. Excellence in engineering, rightaway. Nobody can rival the Germans in that. Remember, Germans like Daimler, Benz, Otto and Diesel were fathers of the motor vehicle.

Besides, German vehicles are without parallel in performance and road-worthiness... 'Made in Germany' has a ring of reliability all its own.

For this reason, German engineering is the most appropriate for developing countries.

When we decided to collaborate with Zundapp, two of their technical experts toured India, with some of our executives, to decide which machines would suit this country best.



German legends of automotive engineering

Several models were tested rigorously on Indian roads for well over a year. Finally four were chosen.

Q. So it is the engineering that set these bikes apart?

A. Absolutely. They're completely new generation machines. The craftsmanship and technical excellence of German designs have been carefully assimilated, without losing sight of Indian requirements.

They are very efficient, don't mean only fuel-efficiency.

One machine is a significant advance on the moped category. The three others are motorcycles, very powerful but easy to handle.

They're being built in our brand new, fully equipped Rs. 27 crore factory... in Ranipet, near Madras

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them will be on the roads
middle of 1984.

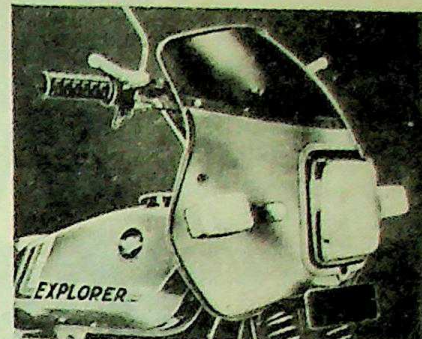
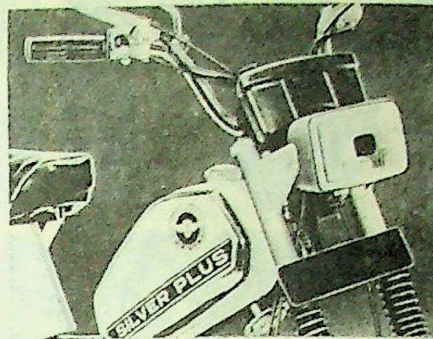
When do bookings open?

Next month, we present a
new in the media of the first
machines. Silver Plus and
Explorer. At that time we will
our programme for
ing and deliveries.

truthfully, we are not as
rned with booking as with
follow-up on deliveries.

We will see that Silver Plus is
the road by April 1984...

Explorer will follow within
months.

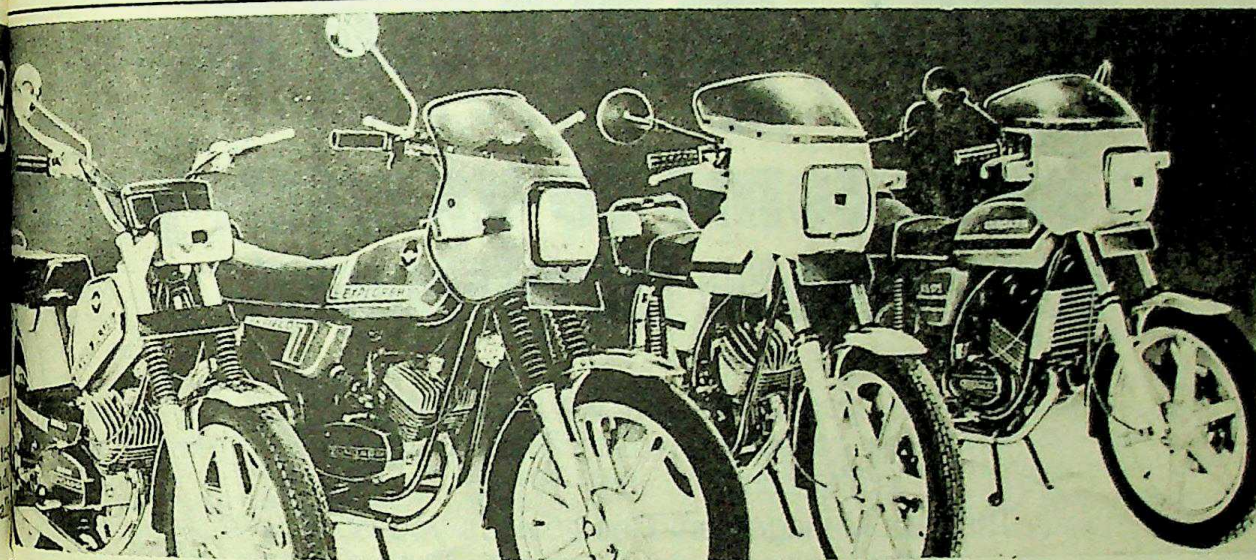


They will arrive first: Silver Plus, a significant advance on the moped and Explorer, a most manoeuvrable motorcycle.

Q. There is a high sense of anticipation in the market.

A. We're feeling good about that... For the two-wheeler

buyer, an era of long waiting and high premia is over. We are going to keep faith with him.



	Silver Plus	Explorer	Enterprise	Fury
output	2.6 BHP	2.8 BHP	9 BHP	14 BHP
maximum speed	55 kmph	60 kmph	90 kmph	110 kmph
consumption	70-80 kmpl	65-75 kmpl	45-50 kmpl	40-45 kmpl
city traffic				
Rs. 5270		Rs. 6614	Rs. 8486	Rs. 11,173
2		3	4	4/5
6.3 litres		8.8 litres	14.25 litres	14.25 litres
Die-cast aluminium		Die-cast aluminium	Die-cast aluminium with disc brakes for front wheel	Die-cast aluminium with disc brakes for front wheel

figure under optimum conditions is substantially higher.
exclusive of Sales Tax, Registration and Insurance

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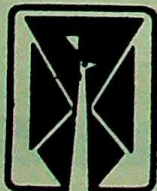
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Raided Times

THE TEA industry was on the boil last fortnight following tax raids on an unprecedented scale. In Calcutta, and other tea centres the Income Tax department put more than 106 establishments belonging to 48 companies under the strainer. The raids sent ripples through the industry not merely because of the enormity of the operation but also because of the big fish it tried to net including T. T. Tea, Warren Tea, MacNeill & Magor. More intriguing, many of those raided were on close terms with the Centre—a fact known to the Income Tax Commissioner D.R. Chakravarti in Calcutta when he said: "I heard that some of the companies enjoyed good rapport in Delhi. But they should realise that this did not elevate them to a category, outside the reach of the

the objective, of course, was to unearth money. Said Chakravarti: "I have estimated that there is around Rs 200 crore of money floating in the tea industry, and I intend to get hold of a sizeable chunk of it. However, what the raids yielded in the way of virtually chicken-feed: jewellery worth Rs 18 lakh, shares worth Rs 42 lakh, Rs 70,000 in cash.

There were some financial peccadilloes unearthed too: discoveries that the former managing director of a major company alleged an account of £35,000 (around Rs 18 lakh) in a foreign bank, while another company president is said to have had a book from Barclays Bank in London. However, the more incriminating stuff was in the documents that have been seized which Chakravarti terms "interesting". He has in fact been reports that the raids detected various modes of laundering money through investment companies, some of the tea brokerage firms, and that one of these companies has been found with an investment of Rs 2.5 crore in such investment companies—using promissory notes and post-dated cheques.

Strategies: The primary objective of the raids was to unearth the underground flow of goods that is believed to be rampant in the industry. Increasingly over the years, the tea companies have been selling their wares not through the regulated tea auction centres—where everything is out in the open—but through direct sales from the companies, where the recorded price could be lower than the sums actually changing hands. A practice that helps keep substantial amounts of the books, and therefore outside the reach of the taxman). Chakravarti alleged that there had been instances

when a company withdrew its tea from an auction, where the quoted price was Rs 22 per kg, and sold it directly "at the absurd but recorded price of Rs 6 per kg. Obviously, it was sold for much more than that."

Sales at the auction centres have certainly been on a decline—offerings at the Siliguri auctions are down from 1 lakh chests last year to 60,000 this year. And when, in an effort to force tea to the auctions, the state Government had slapped a tax on tea sold from the gardens, the industry raised an outcry and got the cess slashed from Rs 7 to Rs 1.50 per kg.

The companies themselves offer a variety of explanations in defence against the charges. Said a major tea producer: "We often find that the price at which we had sold was considerably less than the price prevailing by the time the consignment reaches London. Now somebody may take this into account and accuse us of under-invoicing."

Spirited Defence: On the question of selling directly from the gardens rather than from the auction centres, A. Bose of Warren Tea argued that "we have to do this for practical reasons. For our exports, it takes far too long for the money to come in if we go through auctions. It is much easier to be in direct contact with brokers in London, who arrange payment in 120 days."

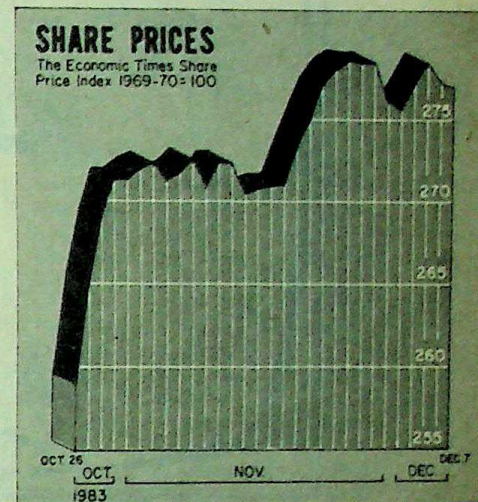
S.K. Mehera, president of Tata Tea and one of the individuals whose houses had been raided, took a more abrasive line: "Where is the law which says that direct sales are not allowed? Right now we are executing a Rs 9 crore order to Iran, and we did not sell through the auction. The world knows that."

Bose of Warren Tea at least concedes the possibility of under-invoicing but pleads innocence for companies like his own. "I know that it happens, but it is ridiculous to suggest that reputed companies like ours or Tata Tea are engaged in such practices." The taxmen, at least, don't think so—for the list of the people raided reads like a who's who: Congress(I) stalwart Prafull Goradia (who runs Contemporary Tea), B.M. Khaitan of MacNeill & Magor, and Aurobindo Ray, former managing director of Warren Tea.

Doubtful Effect: Whether these raids will finally yield anything is now the crucial question, even as rumours go around that more raids are in the offing. Chakravarti admitted that it often took years for the findings to be processed and for specific cases to be filed. There is evidence of purposeful action just now, since a special cell has been set up at the income tax headquarters in Calcutta to process the findings. But the earliest that any case can be filed is March. Though Chakravarti argues that he means business, this time gap that gives the industry plenty of scope to intensify its lobbying in Delhi.

Meanwhile, a tea company spokesman

argued that "tea being an ordinary man's drink, the Government was politically guided with the motive of showing the man in the street that it would be firm with those who have jacked up tea prices. Nothing can come out of this except some harassment for company executives." That may or may not eventually be the case, but at the moment the battle with the taxmen has caused little cheer within the tea industry. —SUMANTA SEN



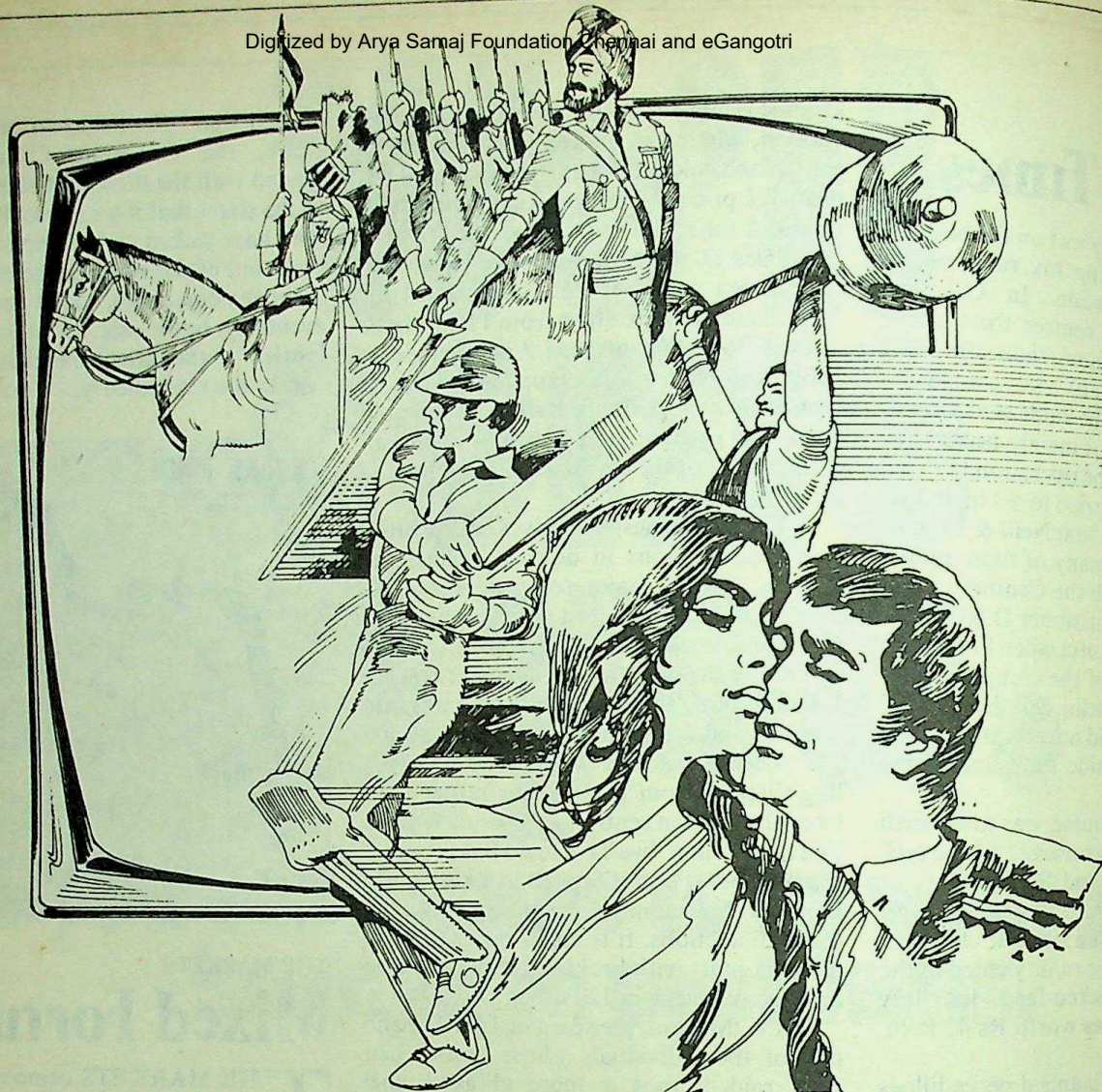
THE MARKETS

Mixed Fortunes

THE MARKETS came in like a lion and are going out, if not like a lion, at least like a tiger. They have done by and large pretty well, the year-end price index being quite close to the year's high. Considering the parlous state of the economy, and particularly of industry, most scrips have held their own and are ending the year very near the top.

Not all, though. Tata Steel is apparently in for a poor year; its profits for the first half were down from Rs 47 crore to Rs 45 crore. The profits of Kothari (Madras), which has now diversified into chemicals and will soon go into food processing, are also down, mainly because of severe loss in output following prolonged power cuts in the south, and the dividend has been slashed from 22 per cent to 15 per cent. Indian Oxygen has maintained its dividend but its profits are down. Scindia has suffered a loss of over Rs 17 crore and prospects continue to be uncertain. Greaves Lombardini which makes engines in its plant at Nasik has suffered a set-back, and its profits are down also.

Some companies have, however, done better than last year. The gross profit of Voltas has risen from Rs 12 crore to Rs 15 crore and that of Modipon from Rs 4 crore to Rs 5 crore. Tea companies seem to have done remarkably well and tea shares are buoyant. The average sale price of tea has



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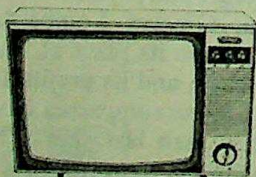
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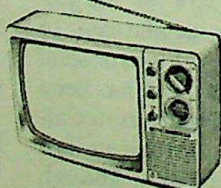
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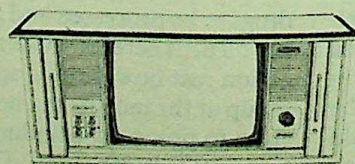
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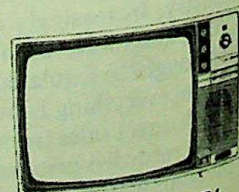
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	High 1983	Low 2.12.83	Close	Change on Fortnight
Chemicals	147.50	120.00	142.50	20.00
Cement	37.65	29.50	32.80	0.80
Coal	45.50	29.00	45.00	1.00
Copper	461.50	325.00	396.00	19.50
Gold	36.50	25.00	36.00	1.50
Iron	1,800.00	990.00	1,560.00	65.00
Lead	48.00	37.40	47.50	nil
Nickel	312.00	210.00	252.00	7.00
Oil	32.60	18.05	32.10	(0.15)
Silver	62.20	46.10	60.10	0.35
Steel	74.50	38.00	46.50	2.00
Textiles	96.00	57.50	62.50	0.50
Tobacco	36.45	23.75	33.25	5.25
Wool	34.70	26.00	34.50	0.50
Zinc	285.00	195.00	265.00	10.00
Aluminium	890.00	695.00	852.50	(5.00)
India	67.65	45.00	46.25	(0.25)
India	27.87	21.50	27.87	1.00
India	99.00	84.00	97.00	1.00
India	33.00	23.00	33.00	2.50
India	105.50	32.31	75.25	(11.50)
Agro	242.00	135.00	242.00	39.00
India	28.40	20.00	26.30	1.70
Hotels	30.00	20.00	30.00	2.75
Engineering	36.00	29.00	36.00	1.00
Specialties	82.87	39.75	69.19	2.44
Specialties	91.50	50.50	71.50	1.50
Specialties	31.50	20.00	25.25	3.55
Specialties	29.00	17.00	23.50	3.00
Specialties	23.00	18.00	21.70	0.45
Specialties	52.50	44.00	52.00	(0.50)
Aluminium	48.00	32.10	46.30	3.55
Lever	71.50	48.58	49.50	0.92
Motors	38.24	26.40	38.24	0.10
Aluminium	25.25	16.25	24.85	0.65
Explosives	28.00	22.00	28.00	0.40
Organic	35.00	25.50	29.25	0.25
Organic	37.50	30.40	37.30	1.00
Organic	86.00	62.50	67.50	1.50
Organic	44.85	31.50	34.00	0.50
Organic	42.75	20.35	42.75	1.75
Organic	57.50	32.00	46.80	5.80
Organic	93.00	70.00	93.00	nil
Organic	68.10	55.80	60.10	(1.80)
Engineering	163.00	68.00	126.00	3.00
Oil	28.25	13.25	28.25	3.50
(Madras)	25.50	16.25	25.25	1.75
Tombro	73.00	52.00	69.00	(2.00)
Specialties	31.50	14.00	30.70	3.45
Machines	90.00	40.00	87.00	7.00
Costs	23.25	15.30	22.50	0.90
Mahindra	66.00	42.00	59.00	2.50
Specialties	35.37	22.69	26.50	1.50
Specialties	292.50	220.00	243.75	11.25
Organic	59.00	36.00	58.00	3.00
Organic	207.50	156.25	167.50	5.00
Organic	51.80	40.20	51.80	2.10
Organic	276.00	229.00	244.00	nil
Organic	50.00	36.00	45.50	4.50
Organic	65.00	36.50	60.50	0.50
Organic	183.00	100.00	107.00	0.50
Organic	40.75	19.00	39.50	5.50
Organic	48.75	22.20	46.80	(0.70)
Organic	41.50	27.75	34.62	2.25
Organic	28.25	15.25	26.25	2.00
Organic	53.75	38.30	53.75	4.75
Organic	67.00	49.50	57.00	(0.75)
Organic	322.50	234.50	249.00	12.50
Organic	455.00	390.00	396.00	(2.00)
Organic	59.00	38.00	54.00	(3.50)
Organic	19.05	16.00	19.00	1.10
Organic	27.70	21.50	27.60	1.00
Organic	26.50	22.00	23.00	1.00
Organic	365.00	262.00	363.00	1.00
Organic	40.30	22.40	40.30	3.55
Organic	14.10	12.25	13.50	0.20

more than trebled during the year, and there are reports that the upward trend is likely to continue for some time. Most tea company shares are doing well, Lipton, which was a sleepy little company a year ago and was in fact a sick company a couple of years ago until Hindustan Lever turned it round, is being quoted at double last year's best price.

Difficult Decision: Prices are so high—most blue chips are quoted between three and four times their face value—that one wonders whether one should go in for them at all. Should one take one's profit and get out or plunge in and buy? This is always a difficult question and one that has never been answered satisfactorily. Bernard Baruch, the well-known financial wizard who, along with John Kennedy's father, made his pile on the New York Stock Exchange and went on to advise US presidents from Franklin Roosevelt to Eisenhower, once said that a high-priced chip does better on a rising market than a low-priced one, although the temptation is to go in for the latter. Dalal Street is not Wall Street and Bombay is not New York but, by and large, it is safer and more profitable to go in for high-priced chips when the market is going up—as it is doing now—than opt for a lot of cheap stuff just because one can buy more of it. Hindustan Lever is better value at 60 than, say, Curewel at 9 or Golden Tobacco at 15. But men like Baruch and Kennedy had millions at their disposal and a host of bank presidents eating out of their hands.

A number of new issues are apparently in the offing, if not straightaway, at least a month or two after the budget which is generally considered to be good time for such plunges. Should one buy them, so to speak, on the ground floor, or wait until they are listed and pick them up at that time, even at a small premium? The latter is safer as well as better, though there might be exceptions. It is also generally a good idea to pick up a share just after it is quoted ex-bonus when it is usually at its lowest. There should be quite a few bonus issues in the pipeline—at least two Delhi-based companies are mentioned in this connection—and maybe a few rights issues also.

And there are always companies like Reliance Textiles for whom apparently the sky is the limit. Reliance is apparently making plans to diversify away from its textile business into, of all things, oil exploration, fertilisers, photographic films and leasing, which should make it, a decade or so from now, into one of the largest multi-product groups in the country. DCM is also moving in the same direction though it is a more cautious group and has to tread warily. Reliance shareholders have done pretty well in the past and are evidently in for more profitable surprises in the future.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates (Rs)	Buying Rates (Rs)
Australia	1 As \$	9.5725	9.4729
Austria	100 As Sch	54.7849	54.2345
Bahrain	1 Dinar	27.7018	27.4920
Bangladesh	100 Taka	42.1068	41.7879
Canada	1 Can \$	8.4562	8.3678
Denmark	1 D Kr	1.0658	1.0545
Egypt	1 Egg £	12.5886	12.4933
France	1 Fr Frc	1.2684	1.2547
Hong Kong	1 Hk \$	1.3492	1.3358
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.0549	1.0469
Iran	100 Rial	11.8784	11.7884
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6391	0.6333
Japan	100 Jap Yen	4.4957	4.4493
Kenya	1 K. shilling	0.7663	0.7604
Kuwait	1 Dinar	35.7673	35.4964
Malaysia	1 Ml \$	4.5028	4.4551
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.8332	0.8269
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.7018	0.6965
Netherlands	1 D Glds	3.4458	3.4102
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.7966	0.7906
Singapore	1 Sing \$	4.9501	4.8971
Spain	100 Sp Pt	6.7375	6.6752
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4263	0.4231
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.3152	1.3010
Switzerland	1 Sw Frc	4.8237	4.7743
Tanzania	1 T. Sch	0.8494	0.8430
Thailand	100 Baht	46.0000	45.1307
UK	1 Pound	15.2357	15.0989
USA	1 US \$	10.5525	10.4125
UAE	1 Dirham	2.8436	2.8221
USSR	1 Rouble	13.2520	13.1517
W. Germany	1 DM	3.8503	3.8109

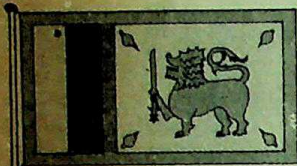
These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the Banks on 7th December '83.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index*		
December 3, 1983	278.7	4.3
Cereals	251.6	2.0
Chemicals	344.8	10.0
Industrial Fibres	187.4	4.5
Metals	372.9	0.5
Sugar	201.9	8.2
Textile Yarn	222.6	1.3
Vegetable Oils	353.8	10.4
Gold, standard,		
December 3, 1983	1,860.00	nil
(Rs per 10 gm)		
Silver, .999		
December 3, 1983	3,560.00 (100.00)	
(Rs per kg)		
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index*		
December 2, 1983	277.1	5.4
Cement	260.6	9.3
Chemicals	223.2	13.3
Engineering	479.7	9.6
Fertilisers	252.2	16.5
Man-made Fibres	429.2	10.3
Paper	546.8	29.8
Rubber Goods	203.8	29.8
MONEY		(per cent)
Money Supply, October 28, 1983	2.0	
Bank Deposits	1.2	
Foreign Exchange Assets	(0.8)	
*1969-70 = 100		

SRI LANKA

Edging Forward



SUMMONING every skill he has acquired in a chequered 40-year political career and relying on all his

well tried instincts for self-preservation and success, Sri Lanka President Junius Jayewardene advanced towards a negotiated settlement of the explosive Tamil issue like a man moving through a minefield. Yet, he also gave the contrary impression of an experienced tactician who appreciates the need to maintain the momentum of the Delhi negotiations and not to lose the initiative he has now seized. As a result, he made political move after move since his return from Delhi.

In October last year, Jayewardene won a second six-year term quite comfortably in what even his sternest critics would concede was a basically fair fight. Two months later, a highly controversial referendum gave the Parliament in which the ruling United National Party (UNP) has a four-fifths majority, another six years. Opposition allegations on the conduct of the poll cast serious doubts on the legitimacy of that exercise. In May this year, the UNP swept a "mini-election" (14 parliamentary by-elections) which Sirimavo Bandaranaike aptly described as a "mini-war". Despite bitter opposition accusations, the UNP looked well entrenched in power and the presidency impregnable.

Reasserting Control: These seemingly secure assumptions were seriously challenged by the violence of 'black July' which rocked both the country and the Government. Two grave questions tormented a badly shaken and stunned regime. How far (and how dangerously) had the Government alienated a Sinhala-Buddhist constituency frustrated and increasingly angry over the evident inability of the regime to contain, if not crush, the resistance of armed Tamil youths, getting more and more daring? How quickly could the presidency reassert its once unchallenged authority over party, government and security forces?

Jayewardene's very first statement on his return showed how sensitive he was to Sinhala-Buddhist sentiment. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), he said, was prepared to renounce "Eelam" (demand for separate state), if a solution was worked

out. Secondly, the Government of India had declared in the clearest possible terms that it supported the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. To what extent though have these assurances helped to remove the deep doubts, the ill-concealed antipathy and the lurking fears in the popular (Sinhala) mind?

The tug-of-war within the party high command has swung, for the moment at least, in his favour. Supported by Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa who has stood for "communal harmony" right from the beginning of this crisis, the President has seen the strident voices of the party's hard



Jayewardene at the recent Commonwealth meet: softening stand

liners become increasingly muted. More and more ministers who were tempted to ride the post-July wave of Sinhala militancy or remain discreetly uncommitted are now speaking up publicly for the restoration of racial-religious peace.

Forecasting Trouble: The Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, paused thrice in his mid-November budget speech to warn the country (in fact, his fellow UNP members) that any more disturbances would only mean an end to foreign aid and investment, and a farewell to the "open economy". This is a message that carries weight with those politicians whose financial backers and wealthy supporters have flourished only too visibly under the new dispensation of free imports and free travel and enjoyed what is described by the gaudy slogan of Air Lanka, a taste of (consumerist) paradise.

His next move has been to prepare the ground for what in effect constitutes a "Sinhala consensus". Twenty-four hours after his return, Jayewardene talked to the newly-elected opposition leader Anura Bandaranaike, who promptly got in touch with

his mother Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Belgrade for medical treatment. He briefed the leaders of the two leftist parties, the pro-Soviet Communist Party and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, and turned tried to persuade him to lift the Trotskyist Nava Sama Samaja Party from the sidelines. They have not succeeded yet.

No Sinhala consensus which Sirimavo Bandaranaike will be held in high regard by the Sinhala influential Buddhist clergy (and more, totally trusted) she is fully aware of the special importance in the present. Yet, she is still without civic rights. doubtless, over the choice of her as opposition leader, Sirimavo Bandanaik is too seasoned a politician to do anything so clumsy as presenting a

on her civic rights and for the Jayewardene on the Tamil question. be guided by her reading Sinhala-Buddhist assessment of how concessions can be made Tamils and her interest serving the friendliest relations with Mrs Gandhi.

Intrusion Resented

moves and manoeuvres, ever, are still confined to land's political establishment. What of the population? "suspicious" and are a few of the picked by some westerners who have recently

the Sinhalese electorate. The average Sinhalese voter resents the "Indian intervention" however correct or polite, the forms it has taken. He is annoyed by the "high visibility" of S. Thondararajan, Ceylon Workers Congress leader and net minister who is regarded as a "robber", if not an "Indian agent". He is about the aggressive declaration of TULF leaders published in the Indian

On December 6, the President Sarvodaya leader Dr A.T. Arambuge postpone his "peace march" across the country. And his "long marchers", many Buddhist monks, Christian dignitaries and foreign well-wishers ready walked 20 km. They had planned to walk from Kataragama in the deep south to Nagadipa in the Tamil north. This was the reason for the price of fuel

Knowing that the price of fuel would be frighteningly large, even Jayewardene's most unrepentant critics quite conceal a certain admiration for the daring old man on a flying trapeze.

—MERVYN DE SILVA

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"See Daddy, I told you
I'd be able to balance
all by myself."



Because its smooth, rounded mudguards and chaincover are made of fibreglass and don't scratch or cut them when they fall or bump against things.

Because it enables them to learn. On its trainer wheels. Which can be detached when the learning is done.

The new BSA Champ in a range of two-tone colours to thrill your child.

BSA CHAMP
The first real bike
for kids.

Your child's confidence is built on the new BSA Champ.

Taxes extra. Available in select towns only CC-0. In Public Domain. Gurukul Kangri Collection, Haridwar

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CHAIRMAN

CHAIRMAN

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri



Presenting Chairman.

Vimal announces the arrival of the blue-chip business suiting, made from the finest Merino wool.

Chairman.

One-of-a-kind suiting whose presence commands attention, demands respect.

A fitting tribute to the high-fliers of the corporate world.



Chairman WORSTED SUITINGS

A commitment to excellence.



The airline with the most modern fleet in the world,
still believes in the romance of travel.

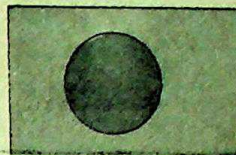


BAHAGH

Change of Garb

"We will now sing only of man and the land..."

—from *Light the Golden Lamp*, Bangladesh President Hossain Muhammad Ershad's book of poems.



AFTER singing only of the army for 20 months since he assumed power in a bloodless coup last year, Ershad changed his tune last month.

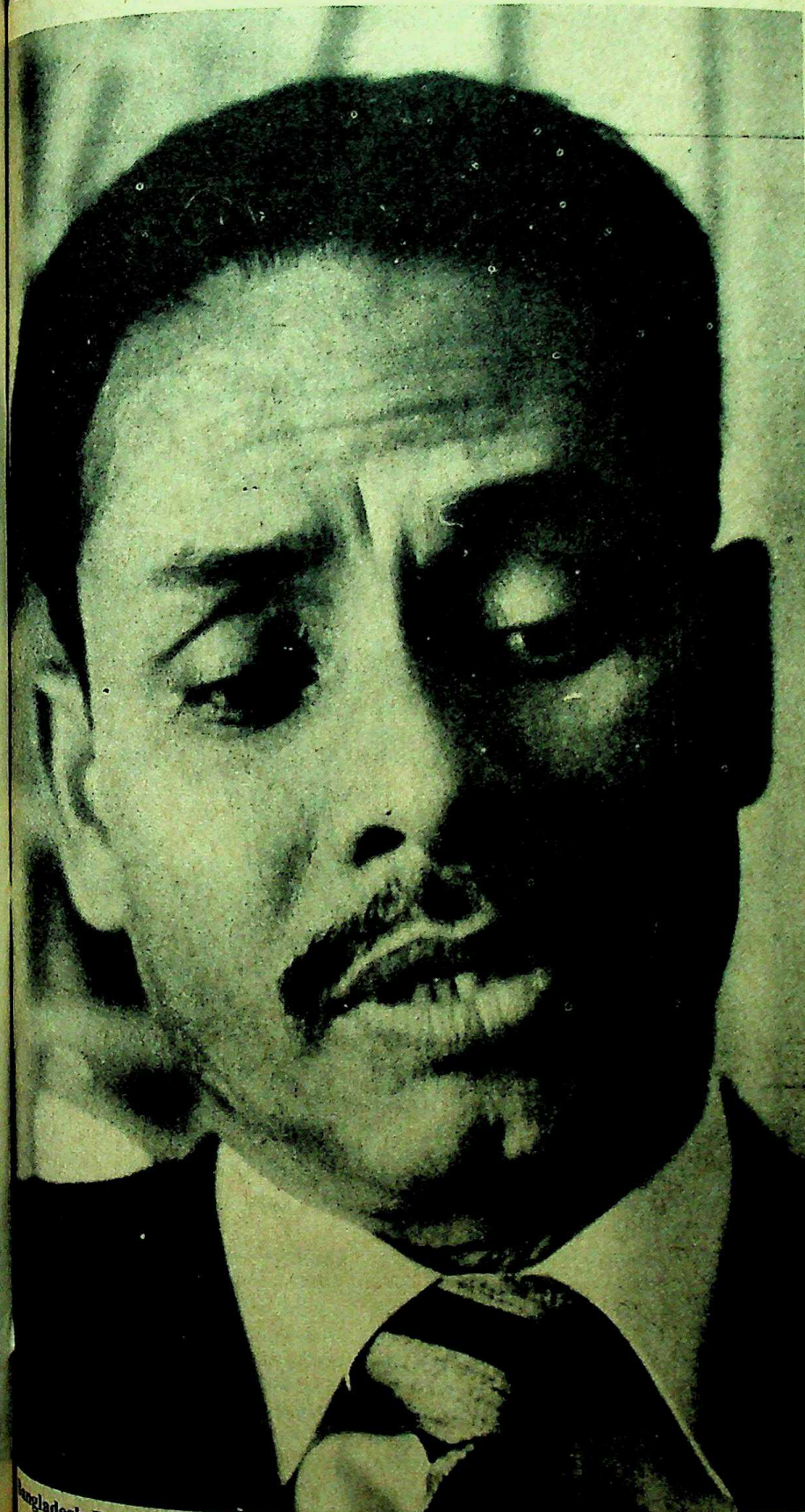
He sang instead of democracy, expressed in the clumsy cantonment phrase—"the civilianisation process".

The culmination of the process came last fortnight when Ershad declared himself the President of the republic without parting with his dictatorial powers as the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA). It came five years after the late Ziaur Rahman had similarly enthroned himself and 25 years after Ayub Khan took over as the sub-continent's first CMLA-cum-President in Pakistan, of which Bangladesh was then a part.

Ershad followed this up by releasing several opposition leaders including Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Khaleda Zia, the widow of Ziaur Rahman and vice-president of the Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP). His manoeuvres, which left the Opposition unmoved and the people unimpressed, came rather melodramatically at the end of the Islamic Conference of foreign ministers held in Dhaka with great fanfare. It was only a between-the-rounds reprieve in one of Ershad's bitterest confrontations with a loose coalition of nearly all the country's political parties.

Stiff Measures: Earlier, using an unruly demonstration near the secretariat in Dhaka on November 28 as the plea for reimposing controls, the general had once again set the country on its lurching course towards an Orwellian 1984. In a scenario distressingly familiar for the 12-year-old republic, Ershad had since November 28 banned "all political activity". Army sleuths, in collaboration with the police, had rounded up over 900 national- and district-level leaders of the seven-party and 15-party alliances demanding immediate restoration of democratic rule. The offices of political parties were locked up. Over 160 people, representing nearly every recognisable face in Bangladesh's splintered politics, had been framed in civilian as well as martial law charges and all of them were underground.

The president of the Awami League, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, who was picked up the same day the demonstration took place, was kept in "protective custody", with her telephone cut off and watched by about 20 plain clothes men and armed guards, at her government-official husband's residence in



Bangladesh President H.M. Ershad: starting the slow process of 'civilianisation'

the Mahakhali area. Two other prominent women workers of the Awami League, Motia Chowdhury and Ivy Rahman, who were present with Hasina at the time of her arrest, were also kept in house internment.

Khaleda Zia, who took control of the party when her husband was killed and who is undoubtedly the kingpin of the seven-party alliance, was held at the gate of the Kurmitola cantonment, in the outskirts, where she continues to live in the house of her husband. Khaleda too was kept in protective custody, the euphemism for detention by the military. Commenting on their imprisonment, a top army official in the CMLA's secretariat said: "We don't want an Aquino episode to be repeated here."

Leaders Freed: Soon after Hasina, Chowdhury, Rahman and Khaleda were released, the city was buzzing with rumours of Hasina and Khaleda having reached an agreement with the army by which they might even go back on their movement plans. The rumours were obviously inspired. Hasina told INDIA TODAY: "We want to put an end to the culture of people, by virtue of their uniforms, ascending to power and then descending on the political scene."

Khaleda was also forthright. In a tersely-worded statement, released through her party's publicity secretary, she said: "It is ridiculous to suggest that I have reached any understanding with the army. I was cut off from my colleagues all these days and I will not take any decision unilaterally."

One of the first men to be arrested was Muzaffar Ahmed, leader of the pro-Moscow National Awami Party (Muzaffar). In a series of raids from the afternoon of November 28 to the early dawn of November 29, the military and the police also rounded up most of the ex-army types who are legion in the BNP.

The house and office of Kamal Hossein, the number two person in the League, was visited every night since November 28. Said Taufiq Nawaz, Hossein's partner in the law firm, Kamal Hossein and Associates: "The police have begun a case against Kamal Hossein, but the situation is so abnormal that he cannot even appear in public and arrange for his own defence."

Strict Censorship: The army's own 'ministry of truth', operating under the garb of the CMLA secretariat's 'mass communication cell', swung into action immediately after the crackdown. Working through the Press Information Department (PID) of the civilian administration, army officers transmitted their orders every evening to the offices of daily newspapers, dictating not only what not to use but also sending for compulsory publication statements, photographs, and—curiously—poems composed by the CMLA.

Even *Banglar Bani*, the daily newspaper controlled by the Awami League and owned by a nephew of the late Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, had to carry a poem by Ershad written in free verse. *Dainik Desh*, the party organ of the BNP founded by the late Ziaur Rahman, was closed down under regulation 17 of the martial law, which enabled the authorities to prosecute or take action against anyone publishing articles considered "pre-judicial" by the army.

The restriction on *Dainik Desh* was removed later on but martial law regulation 17 was still in force. In a manner comparable with the Indian Emergency in 1975, the daily newspapers of Bangladesh, 34 in all, bore a uniform look even after Ershad's assumption of office as President.

The new President made it clear that martial law would not be withdrawn in any circumstance, thus setting a limit to the extent to which the opposition parties could expect liberalisation. "You can call the release of Hasina, Begum Zia and others as the first step towards normalisation of relations," he told INDIA TODAY.

DHAKA had been spruced up with great care for the Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference: newly-metalled roads, wide and spacious, were lined with bright glow-lamps. Thousands of bunting and festoons overhung them, rather like New Delhi during the Ninth Asiad. Huge welcome arches were set up at important crossings, with greetings inscribed in English, French and Arabic.

But an element of terror pervaded the festive facade like a thin film of oil. Curfew began at midnight, with only the police and army jeeps moving about the streets. Police parties often raided houses of politicians in hiding during the early hours. Dhaka Club, the largest clearing house for political gossip, was unusually quiet as members avoided political discussion.

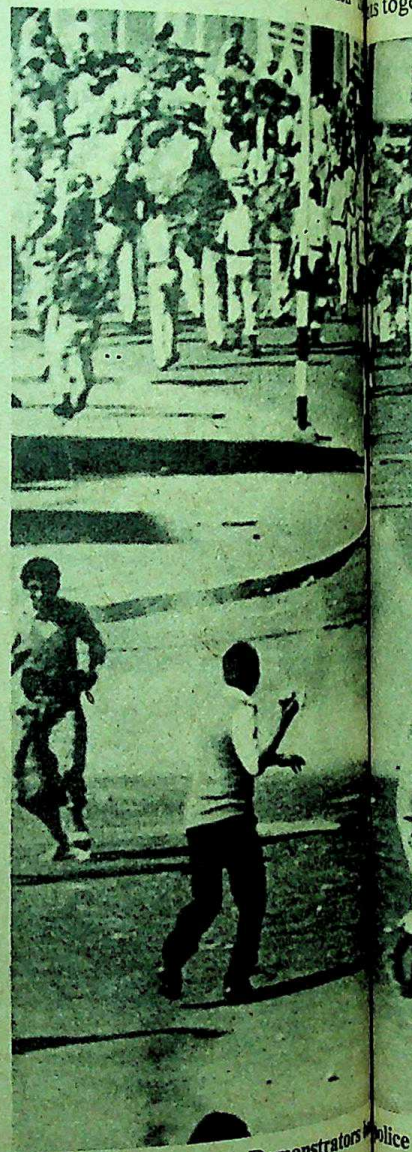
The Opposition, hunted by the police, was still trying to regroup. A week after the incident, the 15-party alliance led by the Awami League managed to smuggle into newspaper offices a statement announcing a general strike on December 20. The statement was signed by Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Bangladesh Workers' Party, an alliance constituent.

An absconding Awami League leader explained that the December 20 strike could well be "the final showdown" with the army. Leaflets were distributed by the 15-party alliance all over the country through clandestine channels. They reiterated the demand to lift martial law, release all political prisoners and hold parliamentary elections.

Political Ban: Ershad's moves have precipitated a complete political paralysis in the

country, where the Constitution was suspended following the army coup on November 23 last year. On that day, Abdus Sattar, an ageing BNP chief who was elected the country's President in the November election, abdicated his office and asked the army to take over. However, Sattar announced recently that he was made to resign "at gun point".

Ershad's first decision on coming to power was to ban political activity. However, there were signs of relaxation later, when



Demonstrators' police

political discussions" were permitted by the army. Very often the parties would use the public address systems at their offices, thus violating the spirit but not the letter of the junta's fiat.

Still, a pressure was building within the country for renewal of the democratic process. Ershad, unaided by the popularity of a Bangabandhu or the charisma of Ziaur Rahman, could hardly ignore the pressure. In late October, during his visit to the United States, he announced a series

for elections: the elections to the local government units, or union parishads, on December 27; the presidential election on December 23 next year; and the parliamentary elections on November 24. The political parties greeted the decision by observing a hartal in Dhaka city on November 1—the first since the coup. The strike was total, reflecting the citizens' general anti-army mood. It was also visible that the long spell of military rule had brought many disparate elements together in the country's politics. The

alliances emerged almost in response to Ershad's frequent jibes at politicians that they were too busy fighting each other to ever be able to rule.

United Opposition: Hasina and Khaleida, the two mourning women, slid into leadership of the two alliances almost by popular consent. Finally the alliances came close to each other as never before. The call for a sit-in at the secretariat on November 28, which eventually led up to the crack-down, was given jointly by the two alliances.

party floated under the army's benign eyes (INDIA TODAY, December 15) became the butt of jokes as a bunch of forgotten politicians, summoned from oblivion by the army and promised plum posts, exchanged blows at the press conference where the formation of the party was meant to be announced. It was a disastrous beginning for a party which promised to create a *natur* (new) Bangla, and planned to rule the country in just 11 months.

However, Mijanur Rehman Chowdhury, the senior-most vice-chairman of the fledgling Jana Dal, who is a freedom fighter and had once been the information minister in Sheikh Mujib's cabinet, was still hopeful. Mijanur is perhaps the only link that Ershad had been able to secure with the history of the nation's gory struggle for independence.

It is largely under his advice that the army set-up planned to declare the late Sheikh as the '*Jatir Sthapati*' or architect of the nation around December 16, the day the country was liberated 12 years ago. This is a sop Mijanur believes will be able to neutralise Hasina's offensive in the coming weeks. But it may be just a fond belief.

IF ERSHAD hopes to gain legitimacy for his presidency through the ballot-box, he will first have to ensure the smooth formation of Jana Dal, his own party; his continuance in authority as the CMLA in the future months, which implies the continuation of martial law; and the inability of the Opposition to agree on a consensus candidate against him.

The plan has been jinxed right from the beginning. Ershad sent feelers to a large number of people enjoying some pre-eminence in public life to join the Jana Dal. Everyone turned down the offer, including Abu Syed Chowdhury, a former president of Bangladesh. Finally he pressed into service Ahsanuddin Chowdhury, a nondescript retired judge of the Bangladesh Supreme Court who had been 'appointed' president by the CMLA last year.

Departing from the conventions of the presidential office, Chowdhury became the convener of Jana Dal, obviously at Ershad's bidding. But the party drew only the riff-raff. Recently, a prominent youth leader of the embryonic party got killed in a Dhaka brothel as a result of a gangland fight, bringing disrepute to the Dal even before it was born.

Chowdhury made a pathetic appearance on television last fortnight, stating that he was resigning on personal grounds. He remains the convener of the Jana Dal, but even that, says a Dal spokesman, may be an eminently forgettable chapter in the army-backed party's coming of age.

Ershad's other major problem was to



demonstrators police on November 28: visible discontent

ere permitted... parties would... at their offices... not the letter... was building... renewal of the... unaided by the... or the charisma... hardly ignored... er, during his... announced a se...

was formed in 1978 to provide the political launching pad for Zia, and also to counter the abiding influence of the Awami League. In the 1981 November elections, al Hossein, the Awami League's presidential candidate, was defeated by Sattar in a particularly acrimonious contest. But the frequent martial law made friends out of enemies and created an urge for broad alliances in a country where politics had traditionally been fractured into many small parties, existing only on letter-heads. The two

While Hasina and her associates blockaded the southern gate of the civil secretariat, in the heart of Dhaka's downtown, Khaleida and her supporters squatted in front of the northern gate. The demonstration witnessed some raw violence, and the police opened fire, killing four including a 12-year-old.

The violence, which might have been the handiwork of *agents provocateurs*, provided Ershad with the vital excuse to pack the cards in a game that was definitely going against him. Only a day earlier, Jana Dal, the

persuade the two alliances to agree to continue with martial law: the two riders that go with it are that the presidential elections will be held under the martial law, and the following parliamentary elections will be held under the President's supervision. The alliance leaders dug their feet in, refusing to be a party to a process aimed at ultimate legitimisation of the March 23, 1982 coup. "Democracy first; discussions later," read the placards carried at many BNP rallies in early November throughout the country.

"Chief (Ershad) sent countless offers to them (the leaders of the alliance) for talking things over," said one of Ershad's close aides in the army, "but they insolently turned their back on our overtures."

Opposition Demands: Meanwhile the two alliances had arrived at an agreement on five basic demands including abolition of martial law, holding of parliamentary elections first and leaving all matters related to constitutional change only to the new elected representatives. They had also evolved a

unique style of harmonising their campaigns, Hasina and Khaleda barmahal across the country's 22 districts simultaneously.

Their tirades against Ershad were becoming increasingly strident, and Ershad was being pushed to the wall. He had admitted this in his address of November 22. "We have noticed with deep regret the allowance of open political activities, freedom of the press is being abused, licence. Demonstration of our many

HASINA WAJED

Optimistic

SHEIKH Hasina Wajed, the 35-year-old daughter of Mujibur Rehman had the time of her life during her fortnight of "protective custody" under the army rule: free of political engagements, staying indoors with policemen guarding her three-bedroom suburban flat, cooking myriad varieties of fish dishes for her scientist husband, and—blissfully—not being able to answer telephone calls.

As President Ershad's police released her last fortnight, it was a return to the grind of politics which was nonetheless welcome. Hours after her release, she spoke to INDIA TODAY principal Correspondent SUMIT MITRA. Excerpts:

Q. How do you look at General Ershad's gesture of civilianisation of the country?

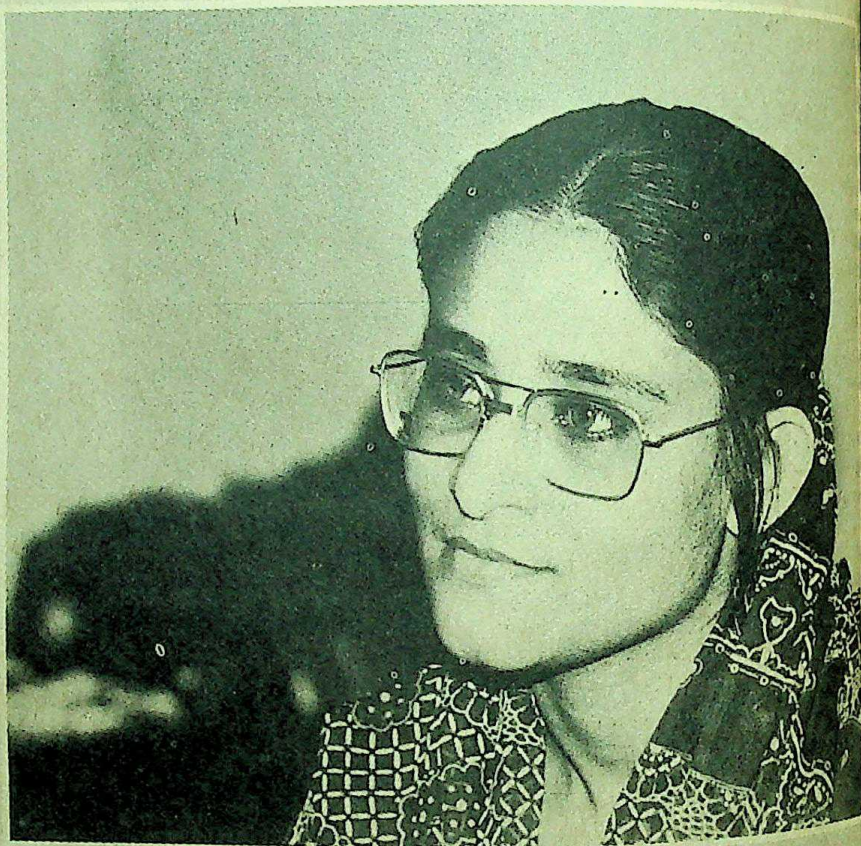
A. What do you mean by Ershad's gesture? His moves are nothing new. The army people have a set pattern: they ascend to power and then they descend on politics. We want to end this system. Our struggle is aimed at this.

Q. Your 15-party alliance as well as the seven-party alliance want the lifting of martial law. But, even if that is conceded, who should supervise the elections?

A. That has not been decided as yet but someone will.

Q. Don't you think that it is easy for Ershad to repeat the past and consolidate his position in power?

A. Not at all. History does not repeat itself. What was possible for the killers of my father in 1975 will not be possible for the men in uniform who are in power today. Of course, I don't rule out the possibility of "announced elections". An announced election is where the radio announces a candidate victorious even though he has actually been defeated. They will rig the elections. But there is a limit to rigging. They have to stop somewhere. And that is where we begin.



Hasina Wajed: "Tomorrow belongs to us"

Q. Ershad has been talking about a constitution which leaves a special place for the army.

A. It is meaningless. After all, the army is nothing but a part of our society. They are our children. They are being paid their salaries. What else do they want? The best place for the army is the cantonment. They should stay there.

Q. But, in your country, they have not stayed there.

A. That alone has added to our problems. By meddling in political problems, the army people cannot solve anything; they can add to the problems.

Q. The army is still in power in your country. What makes you think that things will change?

A. I am an optimist. I am convinced that things will change. They may look

difficult today but tomorrow belongs to us. The Pakistan days were even more difficult. But there was a golden sunrise at the end of every dark night. It is bound to happen here too. Bengalis are a great people: you can never keep them suppressed for a long time.

Q. The martial law authorities have been saying that your supporters misused liberty by going berserk on November 28.

A. The November 28 incidents were totally stage-managed by the authorities. Everyone in Dhaka knows about it. The incidents of lawlessness were created by the agents of the Government.

Q. What is your next course of action?

A. To agitate. And not to stop before the lifting of the martial law.

animity has been misconstrued as... In the prevailing circumstances the Chief Martial Law Administrator, the CMLA, has relaxed those martial law regulations which I had relaxed in the meantime". Talking to INDIA TODAY in the closely guarded CMLA's secretariat last fortnight, army officers were at pains to explain despite the reimposition of bans on political activity, and the arrests, the general attitude of their government towards politicians "is conciliatory and not confrontationist". In an interview with the BBC Ershad even said he was prepared to discuss with the Opposition the thorny issue of which election should be held first—the parliamentary, or presidential. The interview, though listened to in Bangladesh, was not covered by the PID. Next day, Ershad shifted ground, saying at a rally that he was prepared to discuss the modalities of a return to democracy but such a return could only be achieved by the framework of the suspended constitution modified by Zia in 1979. And the 22 strikes there.

The 1979 constitution reposes the power of convening Parliament only with the President, a device born out of Zia's compulsion. Like Ershad, Zia came to power riding the crest of an army coup. Like Ershad, he sought to legitimise his rule by donning the garb of a statesman. Like Ershad, he also thought this blood-splattered country's cycle of army and army rules would end with the new constitution that he gave, beginning with the opening verse of the holy Quran, *Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim*. Ershad feels that he can repeat to the nation Zia's tactics of legalising his position. In a recent speech, he acerbically reminded her that "your husband too was a CMLA, and he too became the President". Khaleda's reply to the criticism was tame: she only said that the situations were different from the situations now.

Questionable Aspirations: As a matter of fact, the chequered constitutional history of Bangladesh and the sickening chronicle of its cast doubts on the credentials of even the Westminister-style constitution introduced by Sheikh Mujib in 1972 was drastically changed by the Sheikh himself in January 1975, seven months before his grisly assassination. The notorious "fourth amendment" of 1975 adopted a presidential system, abolished all political parties except the "National Party" and put curbs on the Sheikh himself assumed presidential powers. He named the "National Party" as Bangladesh Sramik Krishak Awami League (NAL).

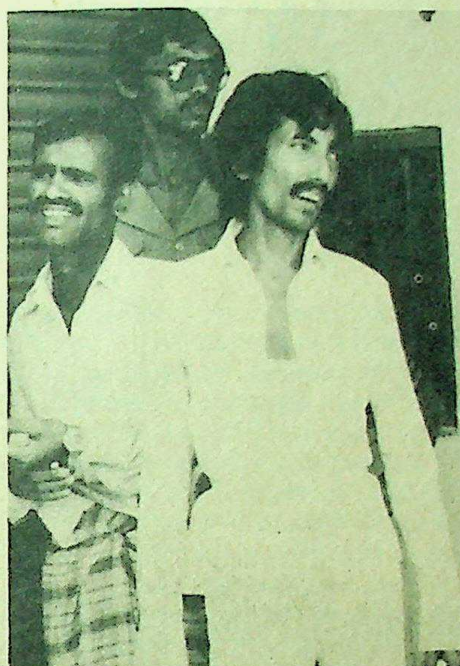
Ershad and her 15-party alliance are, significantly, now campaigning for a return to the 1975 nor to the 1979 constitution but to the Indian-type constitution of 1972 where the office of the elected prime minister is supreme. But the seven-party alliance of BNP wants the broken thread of the 1979 constitution to be picked up from the point where it was snapped—the coup of March 1982. Their heavy rhetoric obfuscates some basic questions, such as:

► If the martial law is withdrawn, who should take over as the head of state.

► How the provision of the 1979 constitution could be reconciled with the seven-

that, as the elected President of Bangladesh, he expected the army only to defend the country's frontiers. This was the basic difference between the army and the elected government, as a sequel to which Ershad overthrew Sattar.

THE ARMY now shrewdly tries to reinterpret history, saying that the BNP government was unable to rule and that the law and order machinery had broken down. The officers of the army are



Police rough up a demonstrator during the November 28 violence: climate of confrontation

party's demand for parliamentary elections first.

In the tense capital, groaning under army rule, it is not easy to elicit answers to valid questions. But by talking to people who are close to the fugitive politicians, it seems that both the alliances could settle for even a relaxed army rule if Ershad assures them of holding the parliamentary elections first.

The army obviously sees a trap there because its fledgling Jana Dal is in no condition to return to Parliament with a majority. And the basic interest of the Bangladesh army goes well beyond the elections: it reaches towards exercising perennial control over the country's politics even in an outwardly civilian set-up. Voiced through Ershad's words, this desire of the army to rule by proxy has repeatedly found expression in the controlled media, the sponsored TV interviews and the general's periodic pronouncements.

In end-1981, soon after Sattar's election as President, Ershad, who was then the chief of army staff, bared his heart to the visiting foreign correspondents, telling them that he would expect the army to play "a meaningful role" in the running of Bangladesh. Sattar responded by making it abundantly clear

now screening before selected foreign journalists the video tape of a Bangladesh TV programme which interviews people to arrive at the conclusion that there was an unprecedented spate of crime in the years preceding the 1982 take-over. This is convenient fiction. There were a little over 49,000 cases of registered crime, including 1,800 murders, in 1982-83 as against 43,000-odd cases (1,500 murders) in 1981-82.

The army of course defends the take-over by referring to the economy which was in bad shape in 1981-82, registering a 12 per cent inflation in wholesale prices and a decline in the rates of growth in both the industrial and the agricultural sectors. But these were due to worsening international conditions rather than the alleged instability of the political system. The Bangladesh Bank, in its annual report of 1981-82, points out the basic reasons, saying: "During 1981-82 the economy experienced severe stress and strain due mainly to international recession, volatile exchange rate and the high interest rates in world markets causing continued deterioration in terms of trade."

With regard to the BNP government, the army was only nit-picking. It did not oppose



Delegates at the conference: more cracks than cohesion

ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

Growing Rifts

DHAKA certainly managed to put its most elegant foot forward as the 14th Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference drew to a close last fortnight. After years of hitting the headlines in connection with war, pestilence and calamities, the 12-year-old republic wore a freshly scrubbed look and a dazzling smile for the 42—of the world's 44—Islamic nations who unfurled their colourful flags here. The conference was as best an attempt at peace in the Islamic world as could be managed.

But what soon became disturbingly clear was that, if anything, there were more cracks than cohesion in the Islamic fraternity. Indeed, more than anything else the conference demonstrated the complete alienation of Iran. The country's delegation led by Ali Akbar Velayati, the foreign minister of the Khomeini regime stormed out of the conference alleging the assembly's partiality towards arch enemy Iraq. The political tensions bristled between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Syrian delegates as well who exchanged dirty looks as reports poured in of the hapless PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's pathetic attempts at escape from Tripoli where he is encircled by Syrian-backed rebels.

Evident Cracks: Then, while the foreign ministers of Libya and the Republic of Chad shared the conference table in Dhaka, it was evident that all was not well on that front as well. Afghanistan remained suspended from the *Ummah*—the Islamic brotherhood—and Egypt lay fallen from grace ever since the late

Anwar Sadat signed the peace agreement with Israel at Camp David.

The conference is a preamble to the three-yearly summit of the organisation of Islamic countries scheduled to be held in Casablanca, Morocco, from January 16 next year. The organisation of Islamic countries was born in 1970 with the intention of encouraging cooperation between member countries. But, as a member of the Iranian delegation bitterly said: "There are more Muslims fighting each other today than they are fighting others."

So, while the *Ummah* meant very little politically, its inadequacies were partly compensated by hopes of economic cooperation. The Islamic Development Bank, based in Jeddah, has since its inception in 1975 pumped into the poorer Islamic countries assistance worth a sizeable US \$3 billion. Besides, an Islamic Shipowners' Association has also been set up, and a large number of Islamic bodies have come up.

Spruced Look: The rather routine nature of the conference was enlivened by the Dhaka Government's attempt to mount it on a grand scale. Even General Ershad disengaged himself temporarily from the political scene at home and shifted all his attention to the conference.

The Dhaka conference showed, at least, the attempt of the religion to rise above national barriers, to tie up a scattered world of 800 million people, speaking 26 different languages, with a common binding thread. But the new centres of crisis developing all along the Islamic world can no longer conceal the painful realisation that national interest comes before religion.

—IHSANUL KARIM
and SUMIT MITRA in Dhaka

Sattar's election because it thought Sattar would listen to its orders and about constitutional changes to have a joint command council with its own representative sharing power with the President. It felt betrayed when Sattar, after Ershad, did not oblige Ershad, after Ershad, a weak-willed person. He stepped out in the most disgraceful manner, disavowing his forcible ouster with a sort of sanctity. Later on, he wrote a cringing letter to the army praying for such pension to him as a former president. This document is gleefully cited by the army as a proof of the legality of the handing-over of charge.

Power Game: Even now, the army has not deviated from its demand one bit. It wants a bridge of affinity to be built between the people and the armed forces. Ershad said in an interview last year: "I repeated the theme time and again, though exact details of the constitutional changes the army seeks are a closely guarded secret. 'We have worked out the details,' a law official tersely said. Many of them that Zia let them down because, fearing the civilian President, he refused to carry out those constitutional changes. They also feel that Ershad is a 'reliable' person who will not 'leave the army high and dry'. At any rate, an uncharismatic President such as Ershad would make, is the best for the army because he can be pushed whenever necessary.

The army in Bangladesh is still holding the country to ransom by manipulating the levers of power in Dhaka. Its isolation from the people is total. It is where like the militia or the 'people's army' in communist countries, working in tandem with the party and the Government in the sphere. Only about 50 officers in the Bangladesh army are engaged in direct supervision out of a total of some 5,000. They stay insulated in their barracks, sip Scotch whisky, playing golf and enjoy their elite status in a society that has moved very far from the feudal order of pre-Partition days. But the society is politicised at the same time, and the military knows that it can deny the democratic process indefinitely only at the risk of being regarded as some kind of an occupation force.

Uneasy Dictatorship: Moreover, the sure of its own cohesion. The military wields power in Dhaka, represented by the key 9th Division commanded by Major General K.M. Wahed and the crack brigade headed by Brigadier Rafiq, the national martial law administrator for Dhaka city, is always apprehensive of even the commanders of far-flung units or even the brass in Dhaka felt uneasy when Major General Abdul Mannaf, commander of

vision in Chittagong, did not use force in the February student violence in the town; in Dhaka, the students were bruised and killed by the army. The Dhaka officers were appressed by the panic button when they began touring the cantonments, greeted warmly all along.

Khaleda is a brave and warm person on first-name terms with most officers in the army. Zia's immense popularity with the army has also rubbed off onto her to a great extent. They reportedly wept when she was taken to the cantonments of Comilla, Bogra and Chittagong recently. The martial law authority therefore took special precaution to protect her from the jawans. While Hasina and her husband is free to leave and enter the cantonment, Khaleda's two children, both boys aged 10 and 11, have never left their mother. Khaleda's sister has been refused permission to see her.

Scared is the army of the 'Aquino effect'—that when a false rumour gripped the country, it immediately ordered the withdrawal of troops. Khaleda might have succumbed to the same fate. Many of the officers sustained in the November 28 election, he refused to issue a statement denying it. It is now a matter of keeping Khaleda in her cantonment house, which is a private residence. The army high commandments are reportedly under way to

shift her to a house in the affluent suburb of Gulshan which was donated to her by the Government soon after Zia's death.

"We are now fighting not one but two ghosts," remarked a spokesman of the regime referring to the legacies of Mujib's and Zia's popularity. He showed photocopies of the Awami League's and the BNP's 1981 election posters which had portraits of the Sheikh and Zia instead of those of the candidates, Kamal Hossein and Sattar. He said Hasina and Khaleda were "brainless wonders" who were being "used" by "clever operators". "The people," he was convinced, "are on the side of the armed forces for they alone can ensure stability." Many visiting correspondents with experience of junta rule in 66 countries of the world had a feeling of *deja vu*.

Strategic Battle: The two "ghosts" surround the army like a nutcracker. Though the BNP is not a well-knit group, Khaleda's association with it loads it with significant potential. And the Awami League, reputed to have a unit in each of the 68,385 villages of the country, is a traditional force that has stood the test of time: even in 1979, with Zia's popularity at its zenith, the League polled 24.55 per cent of the popular votes in an election that was far from fair.

The people in the green, sun-washed expanses of Bangladesh—as well as in the showpiece city of Dhaka—are unusually quiet about politics. They are wary because they have witnessed the holocaust of the 1971 liberation war where three million lives were lost; they have seen governments falling like ninepins and armed brigands capturing power. They will surely not rise in arms, but nor will they allow the military to blast its opponents from the scene. This was evident from the ease with which the politicians were successfully absconding in Dhaka. While in hiding, they were arranging for their legal defence, circulating memoranda and even meeting selected colleagues.

The December 20 general strike will test the Opposition's capacity to survive repression. If it fails, Ershad proves that he can effectively neutralise the politicians, and this is a valuable bonus point in his bargaining with them. But, if the strike is a success, the ruling clique of hawks in the fortress-like CMLA's secretariat will get the first taste of its effectiveness. In Bangladesh, the army suffers from an illusion of strength whereas the people have an illusion of weakness. Maybe in the next round of violence both can rid themselves of some of their illusions.

—SUMIT MITRA in Dhaka

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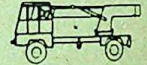
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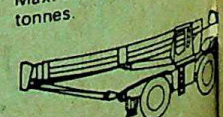
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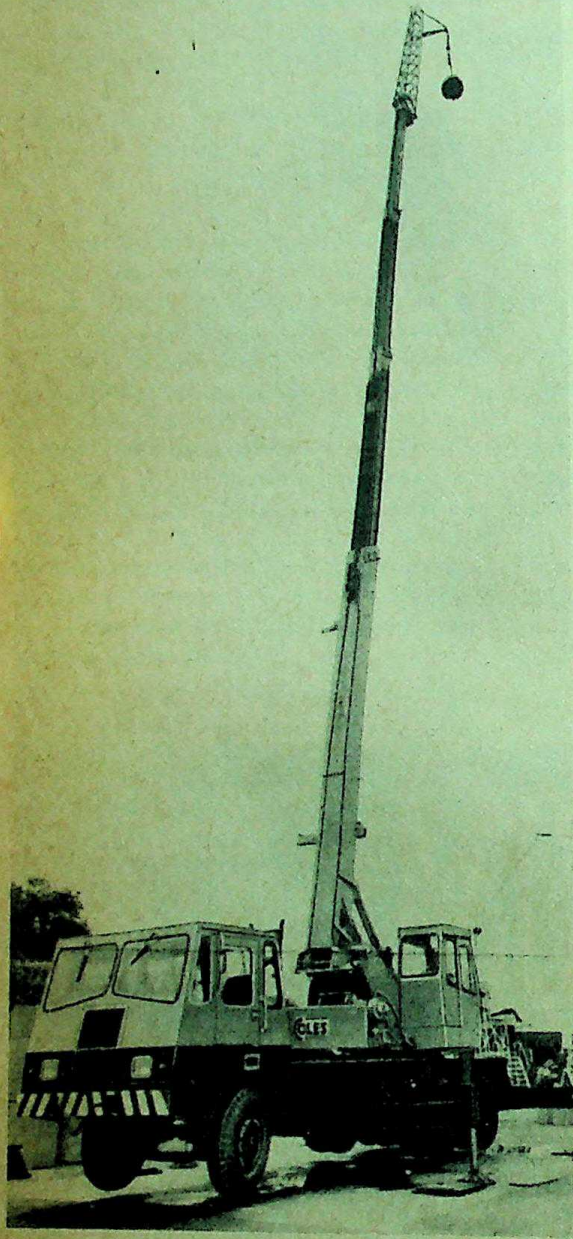
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RAPE

Controversial Code

AFTER A decade of mounting public pressure and three years of parliamentary inquiry, when the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1980—better known as the new rape law—was passed in Parliament last fortnight, the accompanying outcry was hardly unexpected. Of all crimes, rape remains the most savage and humiliating, and its perpetuation the most deeply personal infringement of human rights. Inevitably, everyone has an opinion on how to deal with the problem and the issues involved are liable to arouse strong emotion.

While the entire opposition staged a walk-out in the Rajya Sabha, and the cacophony of voices rose in forums outside Parliament, the rape issue remained unresolved. The Government's efforts to recognise the gravity of the crime by intensifying the severity of punishment, led to provocative argument and much legal nit-picking. While MP Monica Dass of Congress(I) angrily demanded that "killers of brides and rapists should be hanged without trial", another MP proposed castration; and Bharatiya Janata Party MP Ram Jethmalani argued that enhanced penalties could prove counter-productive in abolishing the problem. "As things stand now," he wryly remarked of the new bill, "you are expected to call a notary public every time you jump into bed."

Alarming Statistics: Amid the hue and cry—and the lengthy legal ponderings that appeared in the newspapers daily—there also appeared a short news-brief giving details of a recent survey on crime against women conducted by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD). It took up the principal concern of the new bill—rape of women in custody, that is, in police stations, hospitals and other institutions—by stating that the prevailing attitude among the lower echelons of the police towards women, especially victims of atrocities, was no different from the general attitude of the public. To back up its claims, BPRD claimed that registered cases of rape had risen at a higher rate than other crimes: while the number of criminal cases in general rose by 33 per cent from 1971 to 1977, the number of rape cases in the same period rose by 63.2 per cent, the majority of victims being in the age-group of 16-30; while the majority of these cases were recorded in urban areas, the accused in rural areas were mostly those holding women in positions of economic subordination—business-

men in tribal belts, for instance, or a large number of civil servants. These fit into the category legal experts now call "power rape".

Custodial rape, power rape, gang rape and marital rape—all these come for consideration in the ambit of the new law, though the first category takes up most of the amendments passed. Specifically, the new law has changed the existing Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, to bring



What the amendment means is that unless allowed in writing by the investigating police officer or the victim, the case will be barred from any media coverage.

about the following major changes:

► The minimum punishment for any kind of rape has been extended from the existing two years rigorous imprisonment (RI) to seven years RI but can go up to a life term;

► The onus of proof has been shifted from victim to accused—that is, under the previous law the woman alleged rape and had to prove it in all cases; now, in custodial rape, the onus of proof is on the accused.

► Police officers, public servants, managing staff of a jail, hospital, remand home or "women's or children's institution" taking advantage of their official position and having sexual intercourse with any woman on the premises, even if it is not rape, will be punishable;

► Gang rape or rape of anyone under 12

years is punishable by a sentence of RI to life imprisonment;

► And most controversial of all is Section 228A of the bill which bans any publication of the victim's name, identity or whereabouts with a penalty of imprisonment for two years and fine. In addition, unless the judge or the victim give permission, all trials in future will be held in camera.

It is the last amendment which has caused the maximum outrage and led nine members of the Parliamentary Select Committee to record their dissent. What the amendment means is that unless allowed in writing by the investigating police officer or the victim, the case will be barred from media coverage. Members of Parliament, feminists and lawyers alike have taken a strong exception to this clause, and have turned it into a deliberate curtailing of pressedom. Says Rajya Sabha MP S.W. Singh, a dissenting member of the select committee: "This amendment is tantamount to equating journalists with criminals." Adds Subhadra Butalia, president of the New Delhi-based women's organisation Karmika: "The effects of not permitting the media or women's organisations to write about the case could be disastrous. Most of the mobilisation of public opinion in recent rape cases has been through media publicity and the role of public service organisations."

Even law teachers like Sarkar, formerly of the Law Faculty of Delhi University, who had once recommended the restraint on publicity, realise the error of placing a blanket ban. "During the Mathura case we became conscious of the detrimental effect of too much publicity. But we now realise that it was a mistake on our part to call for restraint. We do not expect such a widespread media coverage," she said last fortnight.

But it is Sarkar, together with three other law teachers, Upendra Vasudha Dhagamwar and Raghunath Kar, who is primarily responsible for bringing to public notice the loopholes in the old law and generating awareness, that were snowballed into the passing of the new law last fortnight. Back in September 1980, Sarkar took up the case of a young girl, Mathura, about 15 years of age, who was in police custody, by writing an open letter to the chief justice. The letter, a widely known document considered to be among the best examples of what is today known as service litigation by direct appeal, was only extremely moving in its humaneness but point by point drilled holes in the Supreme Court verdict on the Mathura case.

What was called the Mathura

place in March 1972 when head constable Ganpat and constable Tukaram, accused of raping Mathura in a station in Chandrapur in Maharashtra. Although the sessions court acquitted the policemen for lack of evidence—among other issues, it pointed out that Mathura had been raped but had willingly consented to sexual intercourse with the policemen—the Bombay High Court (Nagpur) reversed the finding. It pointed out that it was highly unlikely that a young girl in custody would go out of her way to have any overtures or invite the accused to her sexual desires. The high court recommended rigorous imprisonment of one year for both policemen.

But, amazingly, when the case came up for appeal in the Supreme Court, it rejected the high court findings and upheld the decision of the sessions court. The court believed that Mathura had no resistance during sexual intercourse which they described as “a peaceful act”.

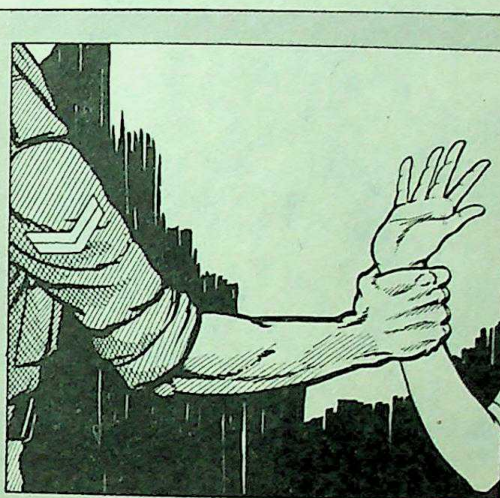
The Supreme Court's verdict of upholding the two policemen caused a stir. It highlighted not only the existing lacuna in criminal law but also went out to challenge the prevailing double standards applied to women. The dividing line between assault and consent being so unclear, all odds it appeared, were stacked against the victim who had to prove her case. What if, in addition to the problem of obtaining precise evidence, she was to be a minor, illiterate and ignorant of legal procedure as in Mathura's case? Would it mean that all rapists would go free?

These were issues that the open-minded chief justice tackled. In its provocative passage it asked: “Does the Indian Supreme Court expect a young girl, 14-16 years of age, to be trapped by two policemen at a police station, to successfully raise her voice or help? Does it seriously expect the well-built policemen so as to have marks of injury? Does the absence of marks necessarily imply absence of resistance? If anything it is Ganpat's case which would have disclosed marks of resistance by Mathura, like clawing and

exactly this argument that has led to the incorporation of shifting the onus of proof from the victim to the accused in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill. But at that time, the contents of the bill were so controversial that Justice Y.V. Chandrachud was placed in a delicate situation of being pressurised under the verdict of his fellow judges.

“I am impaled on the horns of a dilemma,” he is reported to have said. In the event, the case was declared time-barred before it came up for hearing. But the rape issue, buttressed by other cases such as that of Maya Tyagi of Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh who was dragged in torn clothes through open streets to the police station for investigation, and that of Rameeza Bee in Hyderabad who was gang raped by policemen while her husband was beaten to death, became so prominent that the Law Commission was asked to properly investigate the subject.

Extensive Research: Its findings, in a long and exhaustively argued report, were submitted to the Parliament in 1980 and a draft amendment bill proposed. A Parlia-



Feminists feel that the purview of the bill is so limited “that a policeman could still rape a woman on a street and get away with it.”

mentary Select Committee was appointed. It examined 225 witnesses countrywide, including representatives of women's organisations, lawyers, teachers, social workers, civil servants, police officers, medical experts in 44 sittings to come up with the present Criminal Law (Amendment) Act.

The bill itself has split opinion all round. Many feel that its scope has been considerably narrowed from the recommendations of the 84th Law Commission and it mainly concentrates on custodial rape. Professors of law like Lotika Sarkar feel that the law should be more stringent with regard to women being summoned to police stations for investigation. “Under no circumstances should women be expected to spend the night in the lock up, they should be

placed in a women's home,” she says, adding that if women are expected to visit police stations they should be permitted to take two people with them. Sarkar and her colleagues also recommend providing adequate legal service to rape victims and suggest setting up of an office of public defender for women.

Feminists like Subhadra Butalia feel that the purview of the bill is so limited, “that a policeman could still rape a woman on a street and get away with it”. She suggests summary trials of rape cases. “Trials can't go on endlessly,” she says, explaining that not only is the growing publicity sometimes detrimental but the victim herself cannot bear the escalating social and psychological trauma.

Another dissenting member of the select committee, Geeta Mukherjee of the Communist Party of India (CPI) says that the present bill remains full of inadequacies, especially with regard to its definition of “power rape”. “It simply does not take up all categories of influence, control or authority that men exercise over women.” Although the bill has been passed, she sees scope for further amendments. “After all,” she says, “to be a true product of the mass movement, laws must go on being amended.”

Basic disagreements also continue to exist over the increased punishment. Advocate Ram Jethmalani firmly believes that the more serious the punishment the greater the chances of courts acquitting the accused. Says he: “There was nothing wrong with the existing laws, what was wrong was poor enforcement, improper and dishonest investigation, lack of speedy trials and compromising and corrupt witnesses. Moreover, the underlying penal theory is wrong that by doling out greater punishment you can abolish crime.” While lauding the efforts of the bill, he sees it as “a sop to the women's movement”. Rajya Sabha MP Dhabe on the other hand, thinks that in certain instances the penalty remains inadequate. “In the case of gang rape there should definitely have been death penalty.”

While the debate goes on, the bill is now law. If nothing else, it will at least provide some kind of deterrent to potential rapists roaming the streets. Whereas it may be impossible to wipe out the menace of rape altogether—the few cases that have come to light in recent years are only the tip of the iceberg—the debate the bill has generated will ensure focussing the evil in the public eye. New laws, however stringent or encompassing, cannot by themselves be expected to root out the problem entirely. But at least they can serve to keep the issue alive in public memory.

—SUNIL SETHI

NANDALAL BOSE

Retrospective Revival

IT IS sometimes said that an artist truly lives after his death. Last fortnight, it appeared that a major Indian artist was being resurrected. Seventeen years after his death, Nandalal Bose's centenary was being celebrated with an enthusiasm few Indian artists can reasonably aspire for.

In a dignified and refreshingly brief inauguration ceremony on the lawns of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who happens to be chairman of the Nandalal Bose Celebration Committee, declared a retrospective of his work open.

While the offering at the gallery is a small part of Bose's total *oeuvre*, the paintings adequately reflect the versatility and diversity of the painter. The paintings—about 230 on display—include water-colours, temperas, crayons, dry-points, pen and ink sketches and linecuts both on paper and silk.

Mythological Emphasis: The *piece de resistance* of the collection is the *Abhimanue Badh*—a large, expansive mural set in the narrative style, fashionable in his time. A colour sketch in five parts, the mural traces the heroic life of Abhimanue up to his tragic death. A large number of wash paintings on Hindu mythology emphasise a theme that occupied Bose throughout his life.

On view are also a great many of his "Haripura posters", painted to adorn pandals at the Haripura session of the Indian National Congress. In tempera, the posters exhibit a robustness, energy and sense of colour, representative of the finest in Bose's art.

Yet the question being asked is why is there a sudden revival of interest in a

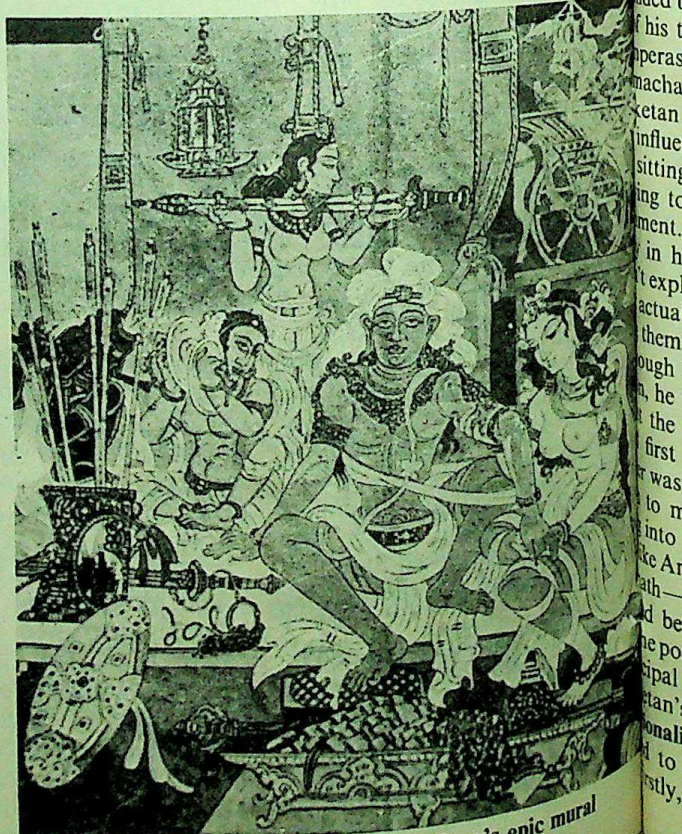


A crayon sketch of Bose

turn-of-the-century Bengal School, much of whose work, in the imagination today, seems to appear as a veils between the sentimental and the and is often dismissingly passed over in anthologies of contemporary Indian art. Bose has, for instance, been virtually stepped in recent revaluations of Indian art in comparison to, say, S. H. Raza or Jamini Roy.

The truth is that Bose's art—and the Bengal School in general—years of reckless imitation, as "modern" schools rapidly established themselves in Lahore, Jaipur and Lucknow during the 1920s and 1930s, so that the overall period saw a devaluation of the art and a descent of the style into "bazaar" art. Or as painter and art historian J. H. P. Pasamya asks: "Artists like Bose belong to their time. Why should they belong to ours?" As a strong protagonist of the school, she points out that he was the first temporary Indian to break away from the traditional tradition of mass-marketed Bengal School art: "The rise of the Bengal School wasn't oriented towards selling but towards service of the artist to the community. They made art part of the life of the people."

Early Signs: Born in Calcutta in 1884, Bose showed a remarkable talent for painting at an early age and his parents urged him to enrol at the Calcutta College of Art.



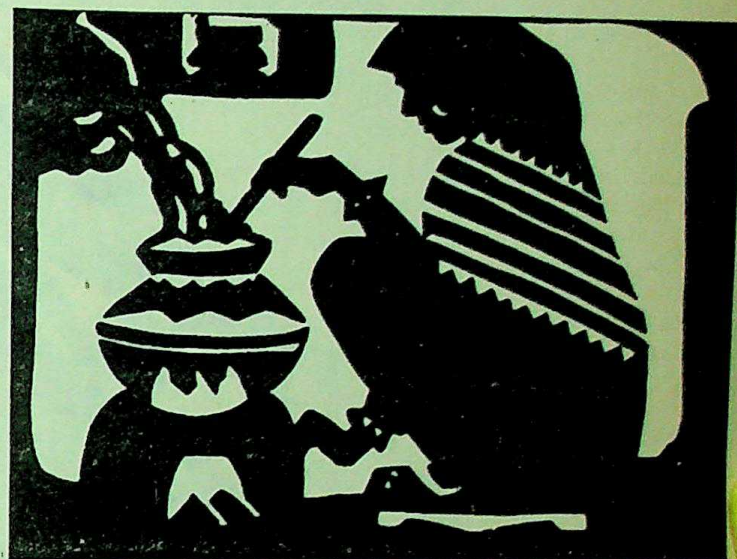
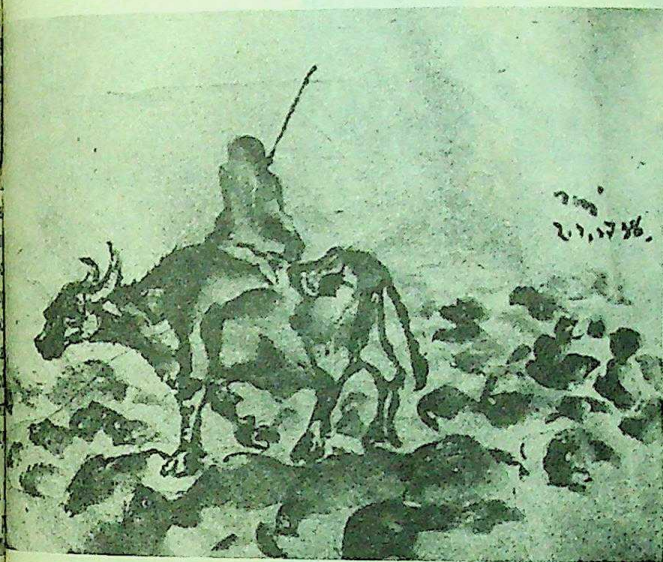
Mother Bathing her Child, tempera on paper and (right) Abhimanue Badh, a colour sketch for Bose's epic mural

The legendary Abanindranath Tagore, then vice-principal and proved to be the influence on Bose's work. Tagore at the time was consciously trying to rid himself of the narrow limitations prevailing in the art under the domination of Ravi Varma and the so-called Company School of painting. As Tagore began to delve into the inheritance, Bose, his prize protegee, quickly followed.

He became the finest draughtsman of the Bengal School, its master technician. Tagore remained literary in his approach to art, while Bose was more literary according to some—Bose

and individualistic in his own right. His commitment to the nationalist cause increased and consolidated over the period. The two "happenings" were not really unrelated. "To understand Nandalal Bose," says Dr L.P. Sihare, director of the National Gallery of Modern Art, "one must pay attention to the politics of his time." The nationalistic sentiment in Nandalal Bose's paintings is not only reflected in the so-called 'Indianness' of his work but also in what he chose to portray. The subjects of the Haripura posters are mainly drawn from the canvas of Indian rural life: cobblers, carpenters, housewives,

such attributes. Ghose, as a masterful raconteur, is a treasure-house of anecdotes on Nandalal Bose's life. He relates a time when one of the rural artisans from a nearby village whom the art school had adopted fell seriously ill, Bose took Ghose and a fellow student to the village to nurse the man. They spent six days there. As on similar occasions, the staff and students in their art school at Santiniketan had no clue where their director had disappeared. Free of all snobishness, he would decorate welcome arches, create furniture, dabble in architecture and even designed the funeral bier that carried



Buffalo Rider, water-colour on paper and (right) *A Woman Cooking*, linocut

ended the historical and fantastic allusion of his teacher to create line drawings and murals of ageless beauty. Says painter Binodebehari Mukherjee who was a student at Santiniketan during Bose's lifetime and was influenced by the man: "He was like a man sitting far from the madding crowd, coming to terms with his own environment. His contribution to Indian art was in his greatness as a teacher—he explained art to his students in lectures and actually demonstrate technique by copying the great masters."

Bose was rooted in the Indian tradition. He turned down a proposition to join the Calcutta College of Art and was persuaded by the poet Rabindranath Tagore to move to Santiniketan in 1920. He came into contact with the giants of the Bengal School—Ananda Coomaraswami and Rabindranath Tagore—several of whose works he painted besides designing costumes and murals for the poet's dance dramas—he became the principal art teacher at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan's art school.

Nationalistic Sentiments: Two things drew Nandalal over the next few years. Firstly, he became more idiosyncratic

musicians and so on. Elaborated Sihare: "The artistic traditions of Ajanta and miniature paintings, tinged with Far Eastern—especially Chinese and Japanese techniques—constituted the essential ingredients of that mature art style which now is unanimously attributed to Nandalal. This style emphasises traditional, decorative, ornamental, narrative elements and their improvisations...."

At Santiniketan, he collected a number of devoted art students; amongst them were Binodebehari Mukherjee and Ramkinkar Baij whose works are widely acknowledged today. "He taught through inspiration," says K.K. Hebbar, artist and chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi. "Nandalal was a man of few words. He preferred to show his students the way, rather than tell them how to go about it."

Humanitarian Qualities: Even so, Nandalal wrote extensively on the practice of art. His writings attach great importance to the role of spirituality, discipline and humility in the making of an artist. There is little doubt that he possessed these attributes himself. Binodebehari Ghose, the artist's oldest surviving student in the capital, likes to see Nandalal's work as a natural extension of

Rabindranath Tagore to the pyre.

Unfortunately, it has become *de rigueur* to underplay the role of Nandalal Bose and the Bengal School in the history of modern Indian art. The term 'revivalists', which is often used to describe them, carried with it the unkind connotation that they did no more than copy the existing traditions in the country. It may be true to say that Nandalal Bose was not a particularly original or innovative artist, but as an important figure in the Bengal School he must be given due credit for rescuing Indian art from the irrelevance of the Company School and setting it back on its contemporary course.

The scale with which his centenary is being celebrated may raise a few eyebrows. The gallery has bought a staggering 6,744 paintings from his heirs in one fell swoop for an estimated Rs 7 lakh. The exhibition will now travel to Bombay, Calcutta, Santiniketan, Madras and Jaipur before travelling to Beijing, Djakarta and Tokyo. It will propagate his vision and importance, through some of the 10,000-odd works of art he left behind, and help re-establish his reputation, in Sihare's words, as the "leading *karma yogi* of Indian art".

—MUKUND PADMANABHAN



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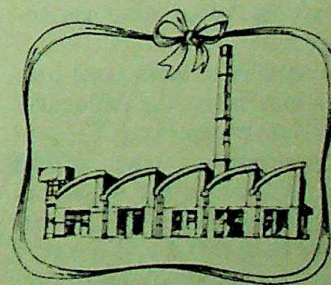
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THE ARTS

MAHADEVI VERMA

The Romantic Rebel

SHE IS the undisputed grand dame of Hindi literature. At 77, Mahadevi Verma is the sole survivor of the poets who comprise the Chhayavad movement (the counterpart of the Romantic movement in English literature). As well known for the sensitivity of her prose as for her mystically lyrical poems Mahadevi—as she is generally called—is also an artist, educationist and a tireless worker for the emancipation of women. She has authored nearly 30 books of poems, prose and translations.

Last fortnight, she received the prestigious Jnanpith Award for her volume of poems Yama. Here, the Hindi writer, Rajendra Yadav, critically appraises the life and work.

FOR THE Indian woman, the 1920s was a decade of change. There was a new awareness, of barriers and of limits, and conversely, of potential and of vast horizons. Shackled for centuries in the conventions and mores of a feudal social structure, a woman could have no communication with the 'outside', no independent aspirations for herself, and certainly no dealings of any kind with a stranger. Outside home, there was only death, suicide or prostitution.

It was in such a milieu that Mahadevi Verma matured—both physically and metaphorically, gradually to become a leader and an exponent of the movement towards a new order.

In the vast complex of factors that contributed to this movement, the nationalist movement stands out prominently. The rebellion against oppression on the political battlefield was reflected on the social and personal level. And for the first time, writers such as Tagore, Premchand and Saratchandra discussed the question of whether the place of woman was in the home or outside.

Shackled Spirit: The social introspection and upheaval of the time parallels—and indeed was partially inspired by—the *Bhakti* movement of the medieval period. In the lyrics of the legendary bhakti poetess Mirabai, despite the complete dedication to worship and devotion to Lord Krishna, or perhaps its guise, there is a strong note of personal suffering and the ever-present shackles. Through her love songs she voices her protest and indifference towards the feudal mores of the world. In a way, she was

the first woman rebel in India's medieval literature. Her statement is unambiguously for individual choice—largely materialistic and often sensual.

It is no wonder then that Mahadevi is known as the "modern Mira". For in her poetry are the same romantic threads—the natural imagery, the emotional intensity and the theme of awaiting a lover, this time an abstract, unknown lover instead of Mira's Krishna. There is the anguish, felt in every fibre of her being, of seeing the deep eternal blue, but only through a barbed fence.

The romantic flights of these love



Mahadevi Verma: an uncompromising idealist

lyrics—at times even mystical—are nevertheless the authentic voice of the contemporary middle class woman, obscured by a centuries-old fog, disguised in rich imagery of nature but struggling to be recognised. It is no coincidence that the motifs of her pictures, published along with her poems, are of mist, fog, moonlight, night, sea waves and vast unfolding horizons.

Idealist Movement: The intellectual leaning of the period was towards idealism. And against the oppressive nexus of imperialism and the traditional feudal structure, all that the idealist could cling to was past glory or the deep blue sky. And this, essentially, is Chhayavad. Among poets Sumitranandan Pant evokes nature and Jayashankar Prasad the past; the poetry of 'Nirala' is infused with the philosophy of the past along with the bitterness of the present. It is perhaps because he was closer to hard reality, that he was driven to near insanity towards the end of his life.

Mahadevi has an awareness of being a prisoner—*bandini* is the word she uses—

alongside the confidence to carry on with her anguish and to come to terms with it; and, above all, to seek freedom. Mahadevi only composed love songs and melancholy verses of personal dreams and aspirations, she might well have been tied, like so many of her contemporaries, the renowned romantic Sri Aurobindo, to philosophical thought and mysticism.

She did indeed later indulge in emotive translations of the Vedas and Upanishads. But her contribution to literature has been much larger. Her powerful prose etches evocative image of the rings of woman in the feudal structure.

Most critics find it impossible to reconcile the apparent contradiction of such prose and such romantic poetry flowing from the same pen. But these are two

the same coin. The same anguish that she expresses on a deeply personal level in her poetry is externalised in her prose, so that her treatment of each character, however minor, is personal and deeply imaginative.

Zealous Worker: To Mahadevi, women's emancipation is more than a theme; it is a mission. For the past 50 years she has run a Mahila Vidyalaya (women's school) in Allahabad where her cherished aim has been education with all-round development. Thousands of women, caught in the mire of household responsibilities and limited opportunities all over the country, have been drawn out to attend her school.

here, even if only through correspondence. It is here that, among her family of the oppressed and the untouchables, she has become *bari guruji*.

However, in the last few years, Mahadevi has been at the centre of controversy. When the Uttar Pradesh Sahitya Akademi Sansthan announced a national award of Rs 1 lakh for her, to be presented by Mrs Gandhi, she demanded how one who had presented an award by Gandhi could present another from the "blood-drenched" Emergency that had imposed the Emergency.

But, in the manner of the award given to the "hians", she went on to receive the award from Mrs Gandhi, and has now accepted the Jnanpith Award from Margaret Thatcher, the conservative representative of the Emergency of another kind. Perhaps the monious debate around this subject is justified by the fact that it was Mahadevi who, in her theoretical work *Sahityakar Ki Anusandhan*, had stridently opposed the Emergency.

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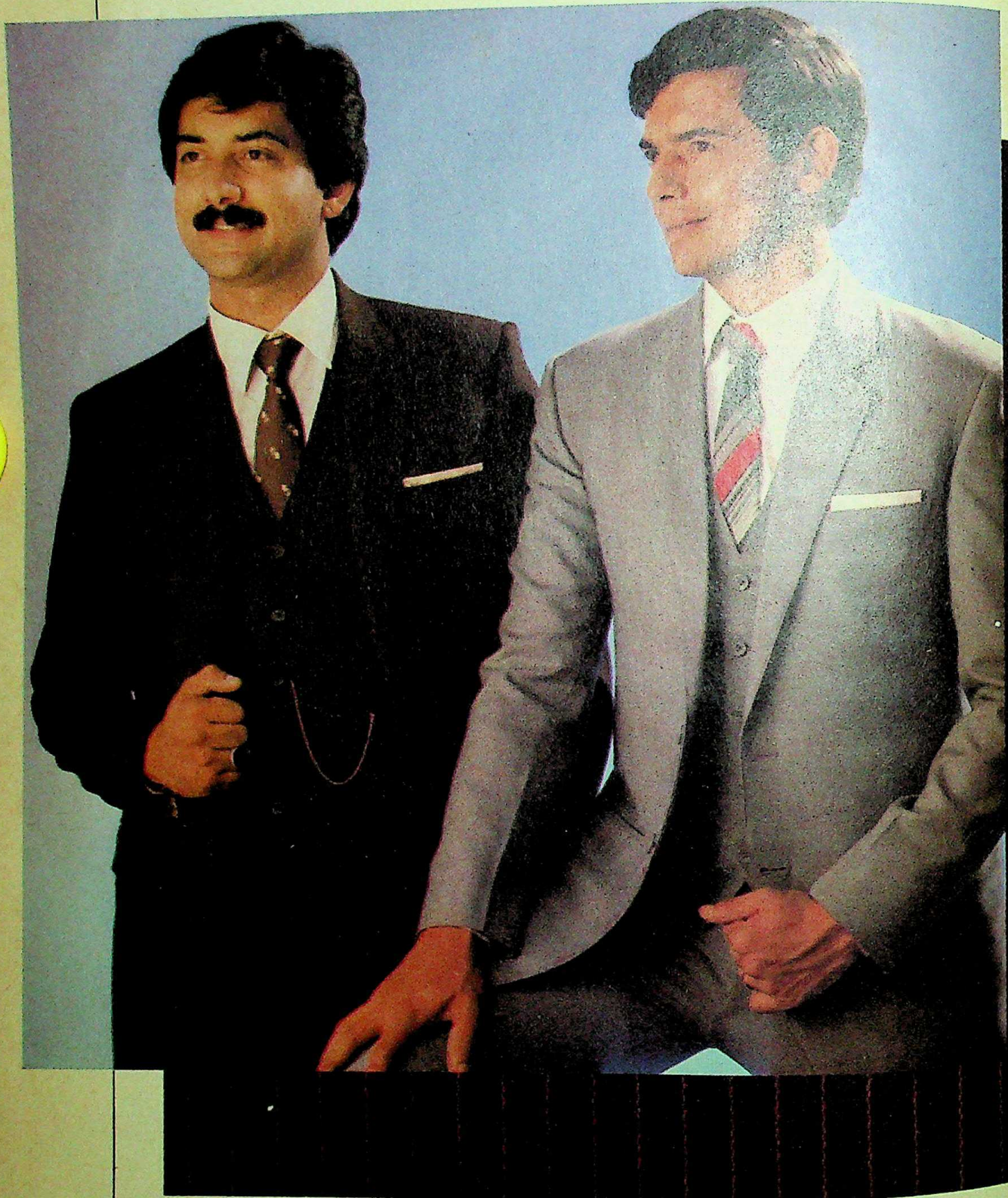
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EL FERREIRA

Champion of the Cue

HERE is now no disputing who the title 'monarch of the green baize' belongs to—Michael Ferreira, the Bombay-based Indian. At Valletta in last fortnight, Ferreira made history winning the World Amateur Billiards title for the third time in six years. For India, Ferreira made history for special celebration as his opponent in the final was Anand Agarwal which made it the first time Indians have figured in the final of an international sporting event.

Ferreira, however, victory almost slipped from his outstretched cue. When the last shot of the semi-final against England's John Dagle, former title-holder and Ferreira's arch-rival, started, Ferreira was down by 735 points, an almost unbeatable deficit. But in what he himself described as a "miracle", Mike as he is fondly called, pulled off a sensational wafer-thin victory to march into the all-Indian finals. Ferreira after defeating Dagle: "Anyone who believes there is no God or that the age of miracles is over, I've got news for you. Miracles do happen, there is a God above and at the moment he is showing his workings on the Indians."

Disappointing Response: Tragically, the following that the game attracts in this country ensured that what should have been a historic occasion was sidelined as the vicissitudes of the Indian cricket team against the West Indies. Undoubtedly, Ferreira deserved much more. Ferreira first won the title at Melbourne in 1977, lost it to the Aussies at Malta in Sri Lanka in 1979 and regained it at New Delhi in 1981 defeating Dagle, a London bus-driver. Ferreira's only rivalled somewhat by Australia's Neil Marshall, who managed to bag the title twice—but over a period of 26 years. Incidentally, the list of two-time title-holders includes another Indian, Wilson Jones. Ironically enough, the second time Ferreira won the title in 1964 was the year he started competing at the international level. But even then, he had all the makings of a champion. In his first bid in 1964, he finished third and only lost to Jones and top Jack Karneham by very slim margins. His next bid was at Colombo in 1967, but a painful leg injury forced him out of the tournament but not before he had dazzled the billiards world with the highest tournament break of 507.

It was not until that in his next international tournament in the 1969 World Amateur Billiards Championships in London by becoming the first Indian to chalk up an official break of

600. His 629 in that tournament stood as a world record till it was eclipsed by Sri Lanka's Mohammed Lafir in Bombay in 1973. Ferreira finished second in that tournament and at that stage it appeared that he lacked the final championship edge to make it to the top. After London, Ferreira went into a slump and it looked like India's hopes of a second world billiards champion had faded. Ferreira had been chasing the title for over a decade without success but most people underestimated his tremendous fighting spirit.

Steady Improvement: Billiards players, like good wine, usually mature with age and Ferreira was showing signs of doing just that, practising for long hours and getting more consistency into his game. In Melbourne, in the 1977 championships, he dramatically dispelled any doubts about his big match temperament and became the second Indian to win the title. If any further doubts about his lack of the killer instinct remained, they received the same treatment in 1981 in New Delhi: he demolished record after record with the brilliance of his table craft.

Billiards's gain, however, has been badminton's loss. Ferreira was one of the top schoolboy badminton players at St Joseph's,

Darjeeling, and would probably have taken seriously to the game had not an injured elbow ended his badminton career at an early age. He switched to billiards and continued to play after his arrival in Bombay to study law and eventually join his father, a well-known barrister, in the family profession. His work, however, gave him little time for practice and less so when he decided to join Voltas as a law officer.

The other Tata company, TOMCO, always on the lookout for sporting talent, quickly absorbed him and gave him facilities where he could spend long hours at practice and play. The results were immediate and spectacular. In 1966, he became the first Indian to defeat the indomitable Wilson Jones. He was then a mere 27, a relative babe by billiards standards. The rest, as they say, is history.

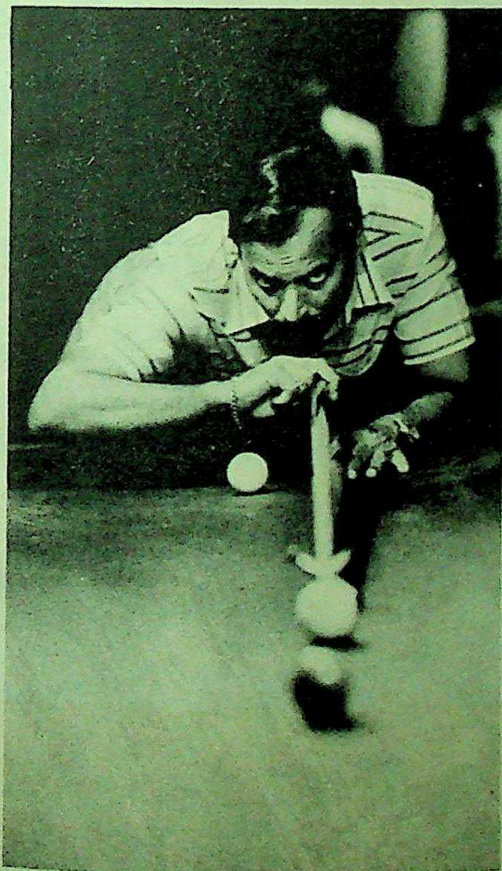
Disillusionment: Unfortunately, the world champion is still a frustrated man. His success has been rudely ignored by the Government. Even after winning his second world title in 1981, Ferreira says he received not one word of congratulations from the state or the Union Government. The only grudging acknowledgement of his existence has been the Shivaji Chhatrapati Award and Arjuna Award. Says he bitterly: "Our cricketers are feted and rewarded for their moderate successes. What will I have to do to deserve similar treatment?"

That bitterness comes through eloquently in his writing whenever he takes on reporting assignments for Indian dailies. In his dispatch from Malta after beating Dagle, he wrote: "I was alarmed by the fact that my play had been deteriorating steadily for reasons I could not analyse other than an intense desire to win and prove to the honourable Mr N.K.P. Salve and others of his like that India has more than just Prudential World Cup winners."

It is precisely for that reason that Ferreira has dissuaded his two sons from following in his footsteps. One son, Mark, took to tennis instead and seems to have inherited some of the famous Ferreira talent. He is now in California on a tennis scholarship and has already registered quite a few creditable victories.

But Ferreira's real inspiration is his wife, Fay. She accompanies him on every world tournament since 1977 and according to Ferreira, was responsible for his win last fortnight. "When I was trailing just before the last session, she told me that I had as good as lost so why not relax and enjoy my game. She then slipped a picture of St Jude, the patron saint of desperate cases, into my hand," he says, adding with a twinkle in his eye, "in fact, St Jude is the joint holder of the title with me."

—SHARAD KOTNIS



Three times champion Ferreira: disgruntled

BADMINTON

Survival of the Fittest

THERE are four words that sum up modern badminton: survival of the fittest. That Darwinian lesson was driven home last fortnight in two major tournaments—the Indian Masters in Bombay and the Asian Badminton Confederation (ABC) championships in Calcutta. Held within a fortnight of each other, they proved to be extremely productive for India's guests. Denmark's Morten Frost Hansen defeated Prakash Padukone to win the Masters, China's Chen Chang Jie overcame a ferocious challenge from Indonesia's Eddy Kurniawan to grab the ABC men's singles title, and South Korea took two of the masters titles and five of the ABC. Host India figured in only two finals—with old warhorse Padukone soldiering on valiantly despite a troublesome knee against sparring partner Hansen, and leading the attack on the Chinese in the ABC team final.

The reason for the Indians' poor showing is more than just a game knee. Time and time again, the Indians ran out of steam, while their fitter opponents, moulded by gruelling daily eight-hour training and practice schedules like the Chinese, stayed the course. National Champion Syed Modi played brilliant but exhausting badminton in the ABC team events to power India to wins over South Korea and Indonesia but, in the final against China, apparently burnt out by his earlier exertions, was only a shadow of his former self and was left stranded by the left-handed Zhao Jian Hua's smashes, losing 1-15, 14-18 in half an hour. As Indian team manager V.K. Verma says: "One cannot say that 'I played in two matches and so couldn't play the third'. You must be able to last the whole series."

Power Play: On the other hand, the Chinese, the Indonesians and the South Koreans were supremely fit and it showed. In the ABC singles final, Chen Chang Jie and Kurniawan hammered the shuttlecock so ferociously that it was changed as many as 50 times. The final score was 11-15, 15-6, 18-15, which means that the shuttle was changed after every

two points scored. Says S.R. Chadha, honorary secretary of the Badminton Association of India (BAI) and vice-president of the International Badminton Federation: "The sport is no longer the toss and drop game it was a decade ago; now it is toss and smash. Unless you are very, very fit, you can't hope to beat players like the Chinese, whose idea of a warm-up, less than two hours before a match, is to skip rope over five-minute stretches, with the rope passing thrice under the feet in one jump."

Talent, clearly, is not enough, although the Indians have lots of it. Says Lu Sheng Rong, deputy manager of the Chinese team at the ABC championships: "We are very impressed with your players. Prakash, of course, but Syed Modi and a few others too. But they should train harder so that they can last longer." Adds Varma: "There was nothing lacking in the Indians as far as technique and the sense of the game was concerned. But

their application and concentration faded with fatigue. I am very impressed by Syed Modi's performance, but he must improve his stamina."

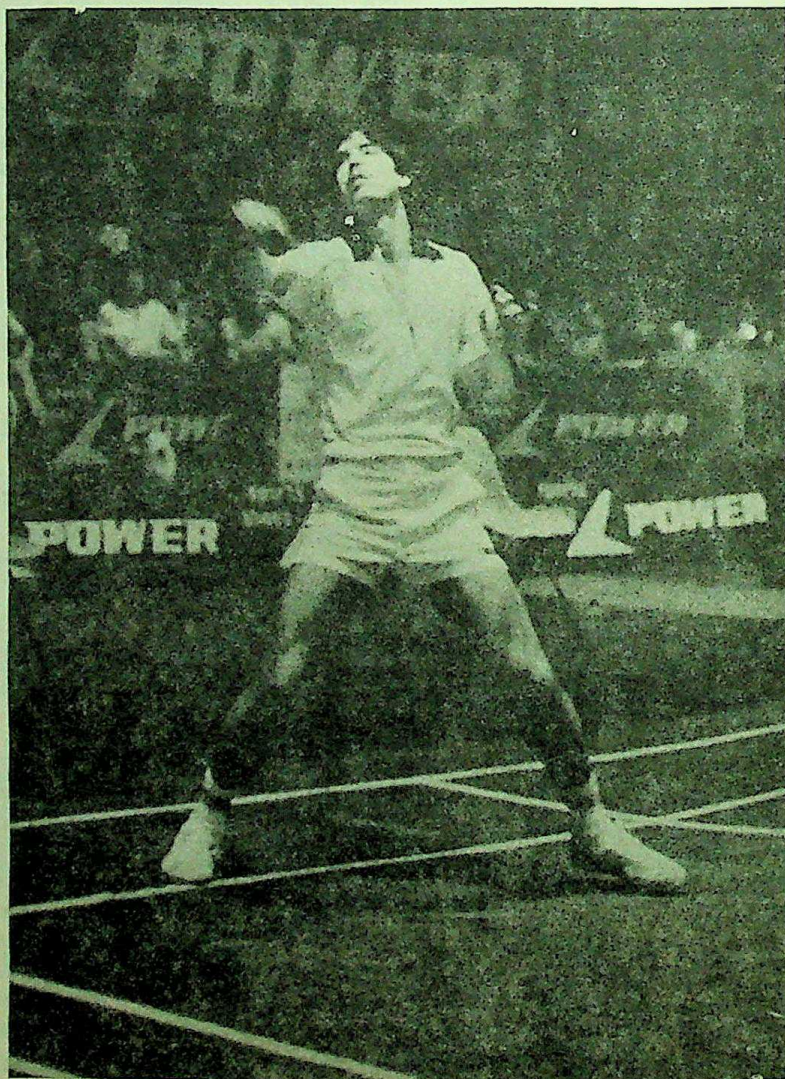
Changing Game: Padukone is one of the fittest of the Indian players. But a former Indian champion and England champion appears to have no doubts. Says he: "I will try my level to sharpen my game in terms of fitness, speed and power, but at this stage it would be difficult to change it." However, he feels that the recent trend, especially in the last six months, is to play an all-round rather than an all-attacking one; it is a combination of the traditional play and the speedy aggressive game of recent years."

The Indians will then have a lot to learn of it, for a mix of speed and guile, as Kurniawan demonstrated to outplay Modi in the Masters 10-15, 15-5, 15-12, could be a formidable tactic. When Kurniawan found that he wasn't getting through Modi, he switched tactics and showered drops on the Indian. Kurniawan used the same tactics in the ABC finals, but

Chen Chang Jie's smashes and continuous drops at the net.

If the Indians want to win more titles they could learn a lot better than to emulate the Chinese. But there is a catch, says Varma: "The Chinese are like an army, they are trained up like machines. They are told to, they are told to, they are told to. I don't think that's a good way of playing but you must admit that it produces results." It certainly did when the Chinese came onto the international scene bareheaded years ago but they have since established a firm hold on the Thomas Cup and Asian titles—and their ABC titles—achieved without their players, Han Jian and Han Jian.

Ameeta Kulkarni, who went to China, affirms that training there is very rigorous. Children are initiated into the game at the age of six and the best are culled and put into sports schools. The system also explains why the Chinese can continue to win the world; in the national scene, Cheng Jian, fresh to the scene, beat Arbi of Indonesia 15-12, to move into the finals—and Arbi has lost over Hansen and Mishra.

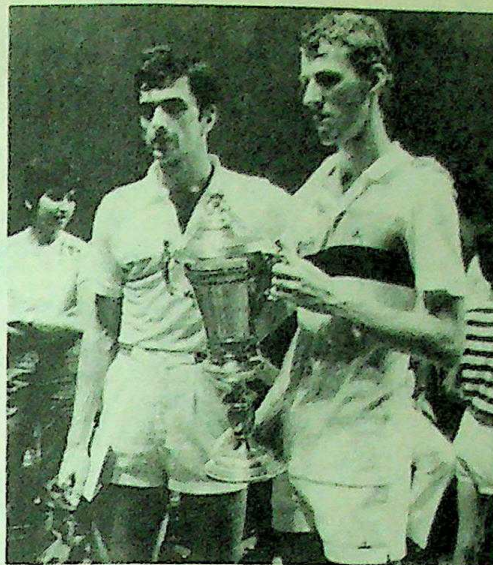


Modi in an ABC team match: running out of steam

credit. The Indonesians, too, follow the same system. Says P. Sumarsono, manager for the Masters: "The government spends a lot to promote the in our country. We also believe in several top players rather than backing a single talent."

Lax Attitude: In contrast to the Chinese the Indonesians, the Indian players, explains Fazil Ahmed, vice-president of BAI, do not take their training camps seriously enough: "Part of it is because they have commitments besides badminton—schools and jobs and so on—while the Chinese and others function on a cradle-to-grave retirement system. So all that their players have to do is play, play and win."

Nandu Natekar, the former Indian badminton ace, concurs and says that the hearted application and dedication to the game is lacking among Indian players. He: "Once you have been to a couple of training camps you should know how to train yourself, whether there is a coach or whether there is a match or not." Natekar cites the example of Padukone, who vir-



Padukone (left) and Masters victor Frost Hansen: gruelling game

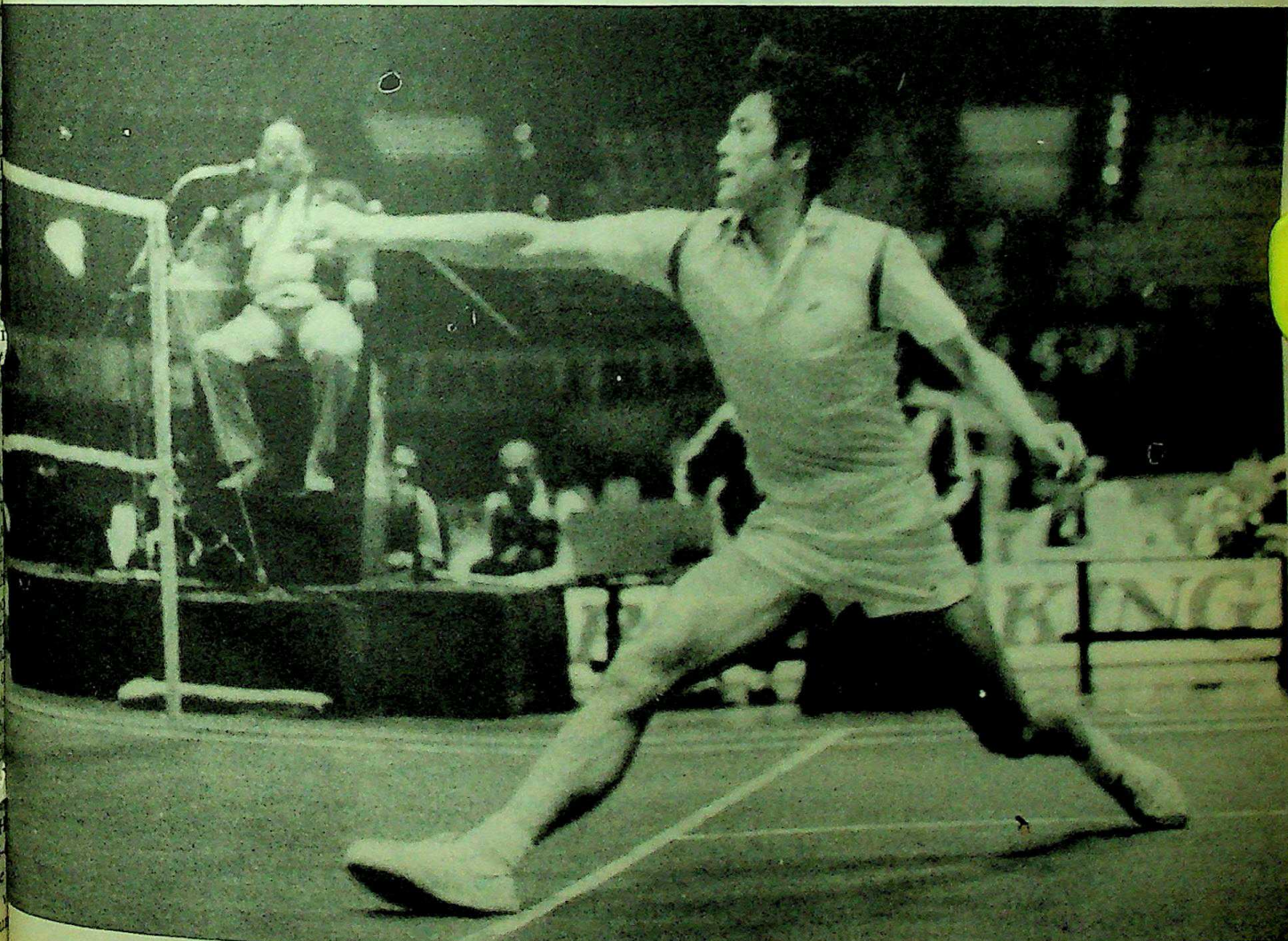
tually trained himself into one of the world's finest players.

On top of this is the recent unsavoury controversy over facilities connected with BAI-organised selection trials. Seven national

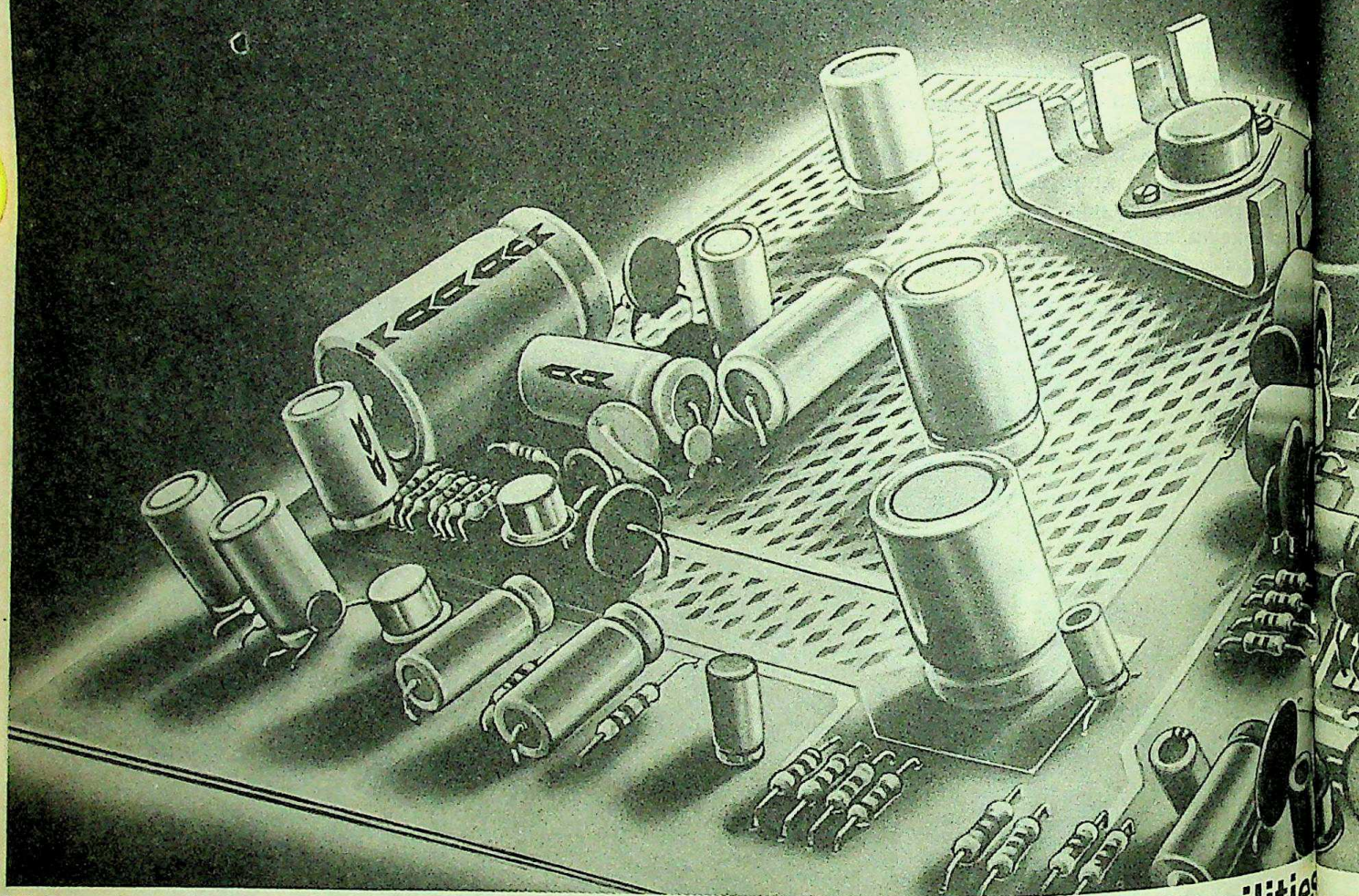
players boycotted the camp before the Masters and the selectors chose a makeshift doubles team. The BAI announced another selection trial but just as things were calming down heated them up again by demanding an apology from the so-called 'rebels'. Says Ahmed: "These players are my sons and daughters and I look at it as a family quarrel." The players do not appreciate this "patronising" attitude and complain that they get very little encouragement, financial or otherwise. They also assert that they are left to fend for themselves and manage their careers on their own.

With this kind of internecine struggle, and without the muscle and the lungs to match opponents stroke for stroke, Indian badminton is passing through uneasy times. Long and well has Padukone reigned, but he is 28 and in this most demanding of sports 28 is a lot of years to carry. Modi and the others have the talent, but they must put on the muscle. Otherwise the spirit will always be willing, and the flesh always be weak. And the weak don't win.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI in Calcutta
with HEMA JOSHI in Bombay



An action study of ABC singles champion Chen Chang Jie: talent and stamina



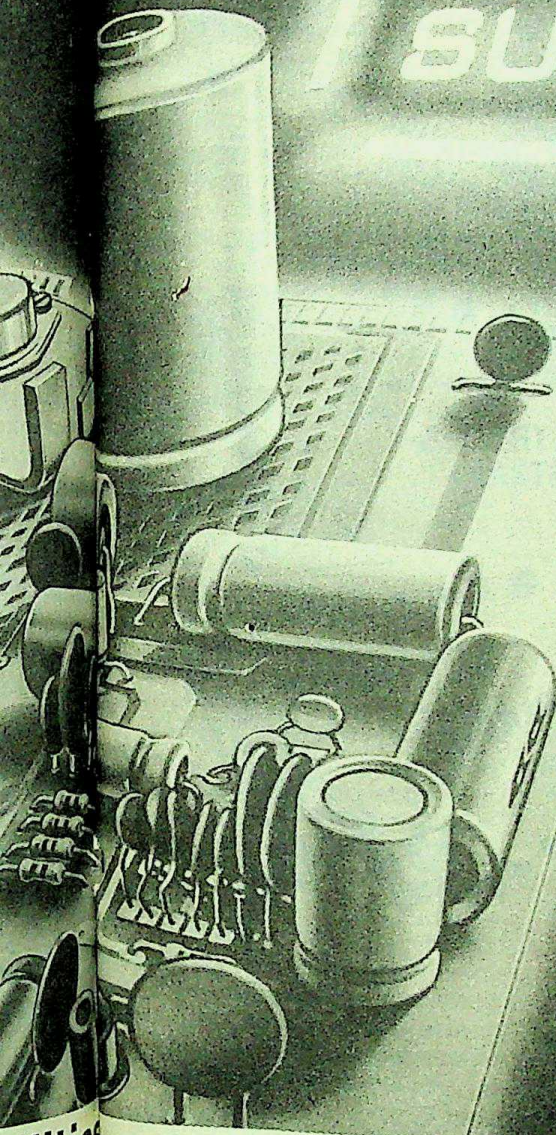
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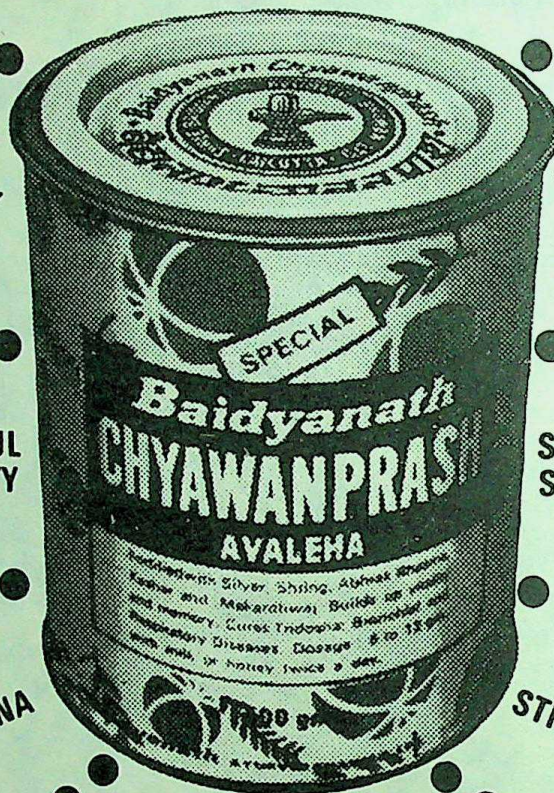


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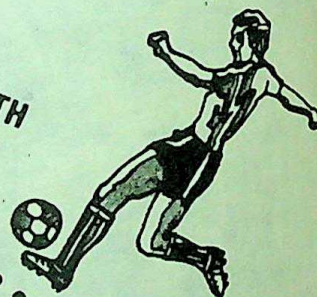
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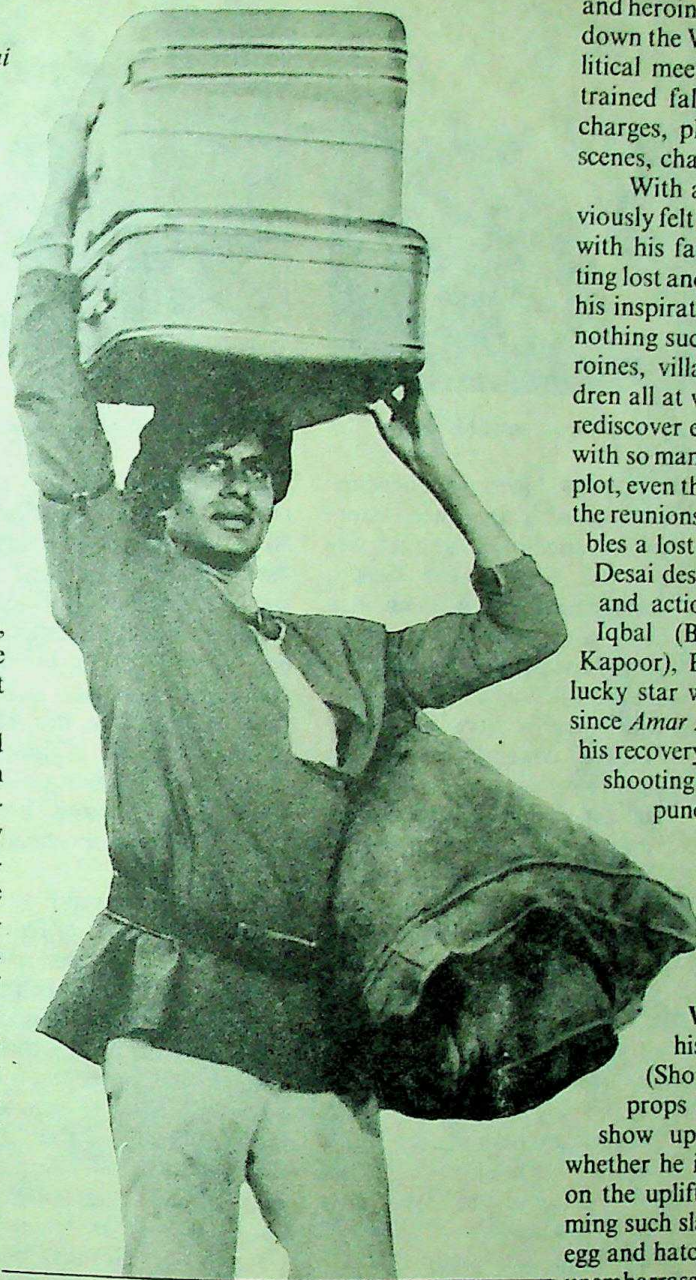
Success Baggage

Written and directed by Manmohan Desai
 Starring: Amitabh Bachchan, Rati Agnihotri, Rishi Kapoor, Shoma Anand, Oberoi and Kader Khan

WITH a string of box-office blockbusters behind him—including *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Naseeb* and *Suhaag*—director Manmohan Desai can rightly be said to have a special understanding of the tastes. There is, however, he insists, no sure-fire formula for success. "It is 75 per cent luck and 25 per cent hard work," he says. "Just as food requires salt and spices in the right proportion to make it tasty, my film." In his latest movie *Coolie*, the master entertainer seems to have got the recipe wrong and forgotten the meat masala.

Even before its release, *Coolie* had become a part of film folklore as the movie in which Amitabh Bachchan was seriously injured before making a spectacular recovery (TODAY, August 31, 1982). To get maximum mileage, the dramatic punch scene has been frozen twice and a subtitle added that this is the historic moment when disaster struck temporarily, on July 2. After Bachchan miraculously recovered, Desai felt that art had to imitate life. Though originally the plot called for him to die at the end, the script was changed to make him survive even after being daddled with bullets.

Excitement Aplenty: Desai says: "To hook a public into watching spellbound for hours is no mean art and something that called art movies can never achieve. *Coolie* offers plenty of stock-in-trade and delights". Among them: a



Bachchan in *Coolie*: all masala and no meat



village flood scene following the bursting of a dam, a Haj pilgrimage ship and prayers in Mecca, a romance scene in which the hero and heroine push Rs 16,000 worth of oranges down the Western Ghats, a razzle-dazzle political meeting with a cast of thousands, a trained falcon costing Rs 1.5 lakh in hire charges, plus an endless sequence of fight scenes, chase scenes and songs and dances.

With all that at his disposal, Desai obviously felt no need for a plot and improvises with his favourite theme of characters getting lost and found for which he says he drew his inspiration from the *Mahabharat*. Since nothing succeeds like excess; the heroes, heroines, villains, mothers, fathers and children all at various points get misplaced and rediscover each other over a decade later—with so many of them peppered through the plot, even the script-writer gets casual about the reunions and the scenario at times resembles a lost property office.

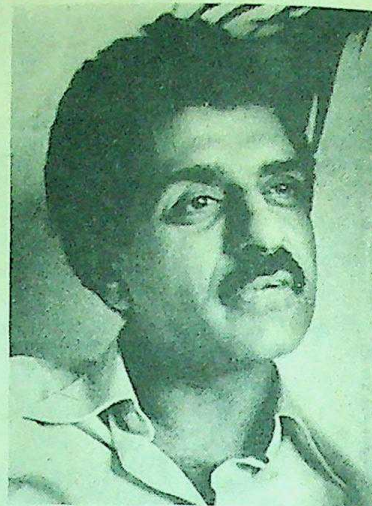
Desai describes his films as hero-oriented and action packed. Of the two heroes, Iqbal (Bachchan) and Sunny (Rishi Kapoor), Bachchan is his favourite—his lucky star whom he has cast in every film since *Amar Akbar Anthony*. Bachchan, after his recovery, continued the interrupted film shooting by gamely enacting many more punching bouts. The action includes him jumping in slow motion from a roof, and at one stage, like Tarzan with Jane, he props Julie (Rati Agnihotri) on his shoulder and carries her off.

Wide Variety: Desai admits that his heroines Julie and Deepa (Shoma Anand) are meant to be just props but their fresh-faced looks do show up Bachchan's age a bit. Still, whether he is spouting bombastic speeches on the upliftment of the coolies or performing such slapstick comedy as sitting on an egg and hatching a chicken, he tries to look unembarrassed and puts his soul into it. Salma (Waheeda Rehman), his long-separated mother, tries equally hard to take her part seriously.

The script stresses egalitarianism by making the illiterate coolie marry a spoiled rich girl. And to bridge the gulf in their prospects, the coolie has to join politics. As villain Zafer Khan (Kader Khan) notes: "When all other business fails, try the elections."

Given Desai's past directorial successes, the odds are heavily in favour of a jubilee run for this Rs 3 crore bit of nonsense. But it just could be that the icing is laid on too thick and while tastes may have changed, the super-entertainer's formula has not. The reaction of people leaving the film could well be: Haven't we seen this somewhere before?

—COOMI KAPOOR

Saira Banu and Dilip Kumar in *Duniya*: saleable pair

Tariq Ali: mellow polemics

■ She had been summarily dismissed as the showpiece behind thespian actor-husband **Dilip Kumar**'s high-profile personality during the last eight years. And just when film buffs and fans had almost relegated her to backstage as the anguished housewife, sobbing over her husband's controversial broken affair, **Saira Banu** made a dramatic comeback to films last fortnight. And, taking no chances, she was pitted against her own husband, a highly saleable commodity at the box-office, in Ramesh Talwar's *Duniya*. Going by her past performances, where her appeal was determined by how much she'd reveal of her curvaceous figure, she could well pose a threat to the *sati savitri* stereotypes of the silver screen.

■ She created a storm in Bombay's film world, notably in the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune, way



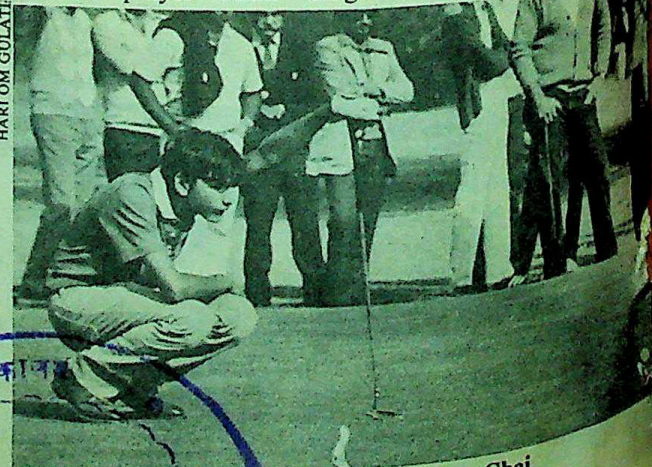
Candy: dandy comeback

back in 1977 because of her connection with the then information and broadcasting minister V.C. Shukla. But **Candy**, rechristened Ritika Singh, has come a long way since then. After leaving the FTII where she was enrolled as a "special student" mainly because of her "official" connections, her film career was nipped in the bud and she veered off from the arc lamps to join her mother in Switzerland leaving an unsavoury scandal behind. Last fortnight she popped back into the limelight, as she began to pick up the threads of her thwarted career in films, while producers pondered on whether or not to dole out contracts to her. Having already done some insignificant roles in a few films, she will now be appearing in the lead role in a film titled *Prem Shastri*. And as for the choice of her roles, Candy cooed: "My body is sacred and precious. I won't bare for any small roles but only if I am the heroine."

■ Like wine, firebrand radicals mellow with age. **Tariq Ali**, the archetypal pulpit revolutionary now greying fashionably at the temples, is no exception and is going to talk less and write more. Ali was in India last fortnight researching his forthcoming book, *The Rediscovery of India* which he hopes to bring out by the end of next year. The book, he says, "is by no means going to be 100 per cent politics and culture. But there will be polemics mostly against...

Anglophiles in India and Indophobes in Britain and Europe." Ali's last series of polemics, subtly titled *Can Pakistan Survive?*, earned him a place on the Pakistan Government's blacklist. Meanwhile, he brushes the competition aside, saying of that other great non-resident polemicist V.S. Naipaul that "he's not a political critic but a critic of the dung heaps of India. Utterly superficial."

■ Anyone would think he couldn't tell a putter from a six-iron but **Gaurav Ghai** uses both with a wristy elegance that golfers twice his age would envy. They were doing just that at the Delhi Golf Course last fortnight when the wiry 15-year-old got into the finals of the All India Amateur Golf Championship, easily the youngest player to do so. On the great day a hushed crowd in its Sunday best watched the 10th class student and veteran player Alan Singh



Tee-times for Gaurav Ghai

square off for the deciding holes. In the event, Singh was the better of his enthusiastic but not so experienced opponent, the match ending on the 17th hole—conveniently next to the clubhouse bar—when Singh sank an easy putt. Said a disappointed Ghai afterwards: "My putting wasn't very good this morning not as good as it was on previous days." But Ghai, who took up his first driver six years ago, has a professional handicap of 5 and placed fifth in the world Junior Championship in Jakarta recently, has no intention of giving up. Golf obviously suits him to a tee.

SIGN POSTS

■ **Retired:** A.J. Kidwai, vice-chancellor of the Jamia Millia Islamia.

■ **Awarded:** Dr (Mrs) B. Vangana Desai, a well-known art historian, the Dadabhai Naoroji Memorial Prize, for contribution to the study of Indian art.

■ **Died:** Shah Nawaz Khan, 69, former Union minister, freedom fighter, of a heart attack on December 9. Khan commanded the erstwhile Indian Brigade of the Indian National Army, and fought alongside Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Khan joined the army and was elected to the Sabha in the first general elections, from Meerut and constituency was given a ministerial portfolio of various ministries in 1971. He held ministerial portfolio of various ministries in 1977.

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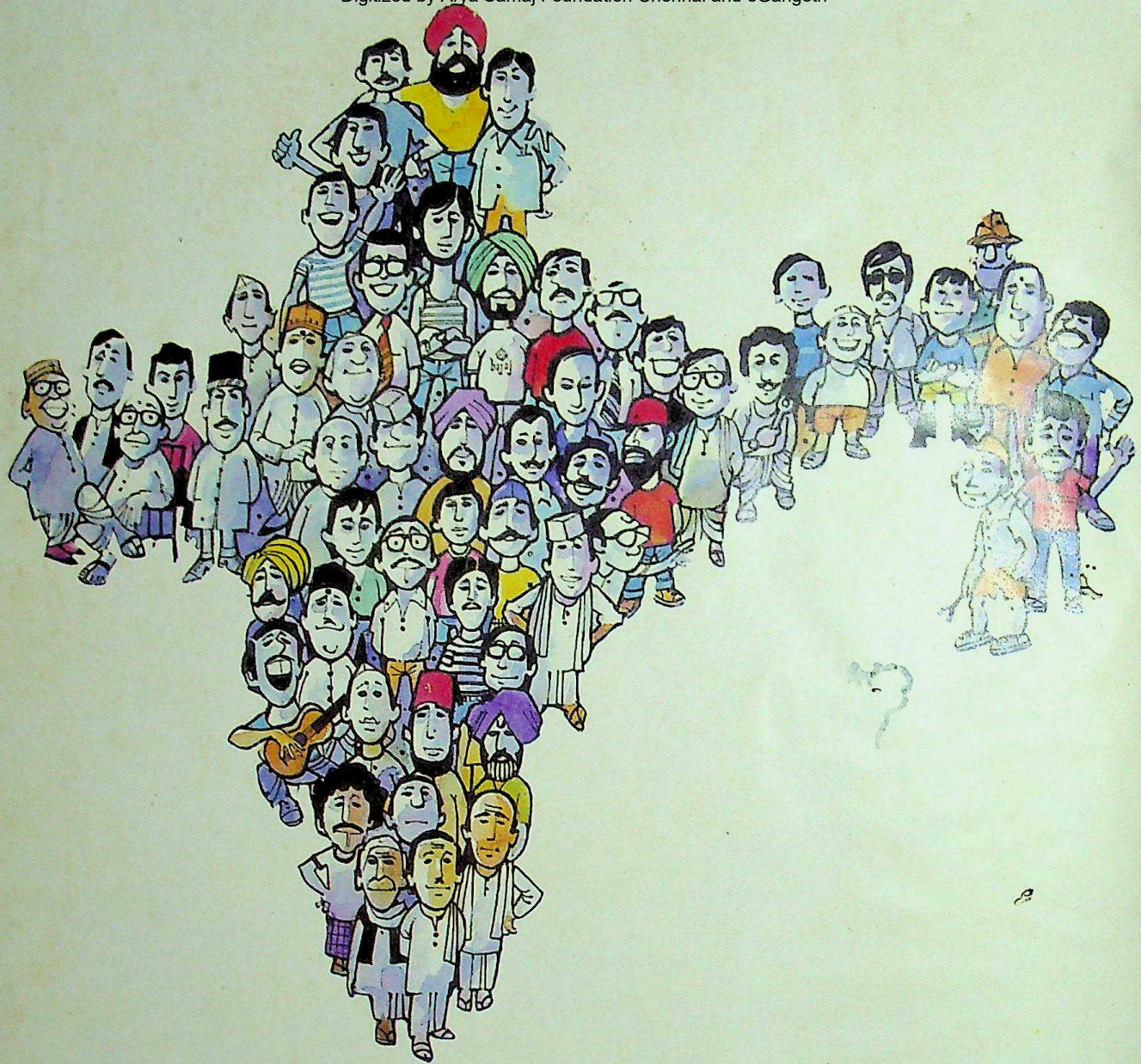


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